THE MEADVILLE THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL

# LIFE OF JASPER DOUTHIT

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BY

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## CHAPTER I

## THE TIMES.

The first half of the nineteenth century in the United States was a period of bustling activity. The North turned away from her sea-furrowing ships and dipped the water-wheels of factories into her rushing streams and the merchant was for the first time bowing to the manufacturer as the man of destiny. The industrial revolution had arrived in America.

After the War of 1812 and the tariff of 1828 industry grew rapidly. The Erie Canal was built, in 1834 McCormick invented his reaper, in 1846 Elias Howe the sewing machine; under the various financial Acts of Hamilton corporate property made huge enterprises possible and immigrant labor flooded the industrial centers, forcing the older stock either to give up their starveling independence and become factory workers or go West.

They went West. They went not as men weeping into exile, nor as poltroons defeated on the economic battlefields of the East, but as strong young Jasons who smelled in their nostrils the savor of the Golden Fleece. These men were before the forty-niners, the discovery of gold but proved their olfactory organ was a proper one, now they sought for Land.

New Englanders opened the Northwest Territory of Ohio and pushed on into the mid-west lake region, but it was the people of the Middle Atlantic States and beginning of the South who poured into the West torrents of pioneering humanity.

Across the mountains of Tennessee the Scotch-Irish of Virginia and the Carolinas started their long trek, fording streams, moving silently through the forests of the red man, building log huts by streams and springs in the clearings, and moving on into the prairie land. They left all but the barest of morals at home and forgot entirely to pack books. The government was neatly contained in the long-barrelled rifle that each man wore as he did his skin trousers or coon-skin cap.

It was raw life with elemental passions always just about to boil. Men banded together for protection against the Indian who had watched their advance with forebodings; they sought the fellowship of tall stories, newly made ballads, and whiskey; helpfulness in house-raisings, plowing, planting and reaping. Within these bands there was murder, rape, robbery, violence, gambling, profanity and general coarseness of manners and speech. If the life was braver and romantic, it was also disgustingly gross and dirty.

These frontiersmen were not without their religious convictions. Presbyterians and Baptists who knew their doctrines were in the vanguard of this march and they could spout religious phrases with the same eaae and deadly accuracy that they squirted the amber juice of tobacco from their bearded lips. They could be depended on to be sounder in orthodox theology than in ethical conduct.

Nor were these people without religious leaders. Itinerant preachers with hearts full of enthusiasm, heads full

of hymns, and saddle bags packed with bible and blanket came riding into their midst with power. The religion these preachers brought was far from being "an opiate of the people", it was stimulating to a fault.

Until about 1800 the religion of the frontier had been mostly Calvinistic and therefore intellectual, but the emotionalism of Methodism and the evangelical wing of the Baptists became the leading way of life and these itinerant preachers brought it in.

The American people who still scoff at art, poetry, music, and literature and exclaim over the flamboyant foyer of a moving picture "palace" were in those days without any satisfactory outlet for those primitive emotions seething close to their hearts. That is they were until the preacher rode into camp and a revival was started. A clearing was usually made in the forest and the wagons groaned in from all parts of the locality bringing the people to the biggest event of their monotonous and emotionally starved lives. When the preacher prayed hundreds fell as if stricken dead and lay moaning on the ground. A woman would raise her voice in a piercing shriek, fall down and convulsively twitch in every joint. This was the first sign of the "jerks" . Soon the whole multitude would be indulging in the "jerking exercise" or taking part in a psychological automatism known to them as"barking" or "treeing the devil". This was signalized by several men surrounding a tree on all fours with their nose to the trunk and emitting hoarse barking sounds.

These meetings lasted days. At night the bonfires lit

up the faces of the devotees of this wilderness cult with wierd lights, the preacher exhorted and sang thinly disguised love ballads, and the audience sometimes went into orgies of physical passion. Children were allowed to preach, a little girl of seven being propped up on the shoulders of a man exhorted the meeting "till she sank exhausted on her bearer's head". *

Once the preacher had assured himself that the entire community had been made religiously healthy by these outward signs of regeneration, he moved on leaving the group with spent emotions and without moral direction.

In Southern Illinois, by 1831, more permanent religious institutions than the camp meeting were established. Young Abraham Lincoln lived in New Salem, Illinois, and was surrounded by five church buildings, but he remarked to one of his friends, "I'd like to go to church if I could hear a good sermon. About all one hears is one preacher get up and denounce another or run down the denomination he preaches for."

Some insight into their theology is revealed in the constitution of the Baptist Church of Clary's Grove: " We believe in the fall of Addam, that by his transgression all his posterity were made sinners." Apparently it was long and heated debates that gave rise to article 8 of this constitution: "No person shall have the liberty of speaking more than three times on the subject unless by leave of the church."

And that those who listened to these arguments did so with some amusement and lack of serious attention is revealed in article 10: "No member shall have the liberty of laughing or

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*Davidson: History of the Presbyterian Church in Kentucky, p.140

whispering in time of publick speech."

At the time Lincoln was living there a person by the name of Mentor Graham was excommunicated from the Baptist church for joining a temperance movement. At the same meeting of the church a man was expelled for getting drunk. Whereupon a man rose to his feet and confronting the deliberators with a bottle of whiskey shouted, "Tell me how much of this a critter must drink to be in good standing and fellowship in this church".*

Rev. John Berry, the father of one of Lincoln's law partners, stood over the open grave of his son and looking into that pit of eternity exclaimed "Son, I believe you are in hell!" .

These churches were not altogether wrapped in theological meditation, they had a very businesslike way of "citing" their members who drank, gambled, joined the masonic lodge, missed church or refused to countenance slavery.** Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately in many cases, to "cite" a man was not to cure him and there are records of the same person being expelled and taken into the same church on three different occasions for the same kind of offense.

Down in Eastern Tennessee, just before the nineteenth century opened, there was a tall thin wiry preacher named Evan Douthit. He was one of those itinerant preachers who knew how to throw a congregation into fits and at the same time hold the

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*"The Church Lincoln Didn't Join" - F.R. Cronkbite in The Christian Century, February 6,1935 .

** W.W.Sweet: Religion on the American Frontier.

doctrines of John Calvin in his heart of hearts. He was a "hardshelled Baptist" and wanderlust was to take him far before he reached the ripe old age of one hundred and fifteen years. He had a son John who was a young giant. John was the only man who could match his strength with that old pioneer and adventurous soldier Davy Crockett.

In Crockett's days in Tennessee, when he was working with his friends and an old granddaddy log had to be moved, the cry went up for John Douthit to take the other end of the handspike under the big end of the log.

About 1830 the patriarchal Rev.Evan Douthit arrived in Shelby County, Illinois, with his sons, including the burly John, his grandsons and their wives and children. Old Evan cleared some land at the head of Jordan Creek, built a log house that stood until 1898, saw that his family was well settled, then walked five miles each Sunday through the forest and high prairie grass to a church where he could see his family around him and hear his own voice raised in exhortation.

In 1818 Illinois had been admitted as a state, and while Shelby County was as wild a piece of black swampy wilderness as could be found, old Evan felt the pressure of civilization. In 1832 he summoned the clan, told them of new western lands his fertile Welsh-Irish imagination had envisaged and the trek was on again. This time to that part of Mexico we now know as the state of Texas.

John Douthit stayed behind, however, with his oldest son Andrew E, who had been born back in Tennessee in 1814. Perhaps it was this sixteen year old son of his who coaxed John

to stay for he had fallen in love with a girl, Mary Ann Jordan. Mary Ann was just Andrew's age. She was born in a fort her father had built in Franklin County, Southern Illinois, to protect their family against the Indians. Her family was Scotch-English and habitual "movers-on" . They came to the territory of Illinois in 1804 through Tennessee from the South. When Mary Ann was ten years old she rode on horseback behind her father the one hundred and fifty miles from Franklin County north to Shelby. Here she met Andrew. When Andrew and Mary Ann were seventeen they found the Baptist preacher and August 13,1833 were married.

The Jordan family, having seen Mary Ann safely married and settled in a log cabin home, pulled up stakes and moved on to Texas, leaving the town of Jordan's Saline as a marker of their visit. About the time Fremont made his journey across the Rockies the Jordans were last seen pushing on into California.

October 10,1834 Andrew and Mary Ann Douthit had the first of their six children. The baby was a boy and they named him Jasper.

Three years before this "in the sight of Bunker Hill and in the birthplace of liberty" as William Lloyd Garrison dated it, the first number of that weekly the <u>Liberator</u> was published, with this statement: "I shall strenuously contend for the immediate enfranchisement of our slave population. Urge me to no moderation in a cause like the present. I am in earnest- I will not equivocate - I will not excuse - I will not retreat a single inch - and I will be heard."

Strangely enough this baby Jasper was to hear Garrison

speak. When Jasper was born, Andrew Jackson was President of the United States. At a birthday dinner in memory of Jefferson the President raised his glass for a toast: "Our Federal Union - it must be preserved". Vice-President Calhoun responded with the toast: "The Union - next to our liberty, the most dear" .

In Boston William Ellery Channing was leading the forces of optimistic liberalism against the darkness of Calvinism, and Theodore Parker was twenty four years old. Ralph Waldo Emerson was in 1834 settling in the "Old Manse" in Concord to write, after having given up the Unitarian Ministry. Lincoln was for the first time taking his seat in the Legislature of Illinois. History was in the making, but little Jasper was unconscious of its march and did not know that these men were to be a great influence in his character and career.

## CHAPTER II

## THE BOYHOOD OF JASPER DOUTHIT

Jasper's father and grandfather were pioneer cattle dealers and drove the herds northward across the prairie to the little village of Chicago by Lake Michigan. There were no roads, and the journey was a long one.

Jasper's father was a "hard shelled" or Calvinistic Baptist,and his predestinarian views completely excluded a belief in the value of education. What a man was he was, and that was that.

His mother was a Baptist but a "soft" one and she, during the time the head of the house was away with a herd, taught Jasper to read from the big family Bible.

But from the time Jasper was six years old there was very little time for study. It was a rough frontier life with but a few days in school saying over and over A.B.C's and "bull pen" and hopscotch at recess. Most days were spent in hard work around the farm.

The only clothes he wore were made by his mother. She spun, wove and sewed them by hand from flax, tow, cotton or wool. The only hat he wore was woven of wheat straw and he went barefooted except in the winter when his father made shoes for the whole family.

Jasper was the oldest in the family and usually had his shoes made last. Later in life he remembered with vividness walking barefooted over frozen ground or wading through snow or icy mud to feed the stock and haul firewood.

It was an occasion as great as the arrival of the railroad when a Pennsylvania Dutchman came to the country and started to make leather boots. There was a rush to the bootmaker and the fellow was happy to discover his business was so great he couldn't fill orders fast enough.

After the days work was done the Douthit family gathered around the big open fireplace with the lard lamp burning on the table, and while his mother worked at her flax wheel, Jasper's father read aloud from Davy Crockett, Weems's Life of Francis Marion, Robinson Crusoe and the Bible. This was the literature that nourished young Jasper's mind.

In 1843 when Jasper was nine years old the family went to Texas to see his great-grandfather, the Reverend Evan. They were on the journey for a month, travelling over rough prairie roads in springless wagons. Old Evan was over one hundred years old and still preaching.

Jasper remembered all his life that small Texas meeting house and the striking picture of the old patriarch with his long flowing white beard and hair, shaking with the palsy and preaching with great spirit. Jasper did not remember what the old man said, but he remembered how he said it. It was then that he first wanted to be a preacher.

Coming home in 1844 the family went down the Red River to New Orleans and up the Mississippi by steamer. There was a beautiful mulatto slave mother on board with a bright eyed child. She had had other children but they had been sold. Before the boat reached her destination, which was the auction block, she clasped the child to her breast and leaped over-board to

disappear forever. Jasper did not forget this; neither did he forget the toiling slaves in the cotton fields of Texas and the stripes he had seen them receive.

Back at home his mother became seriously ill. Everyone believed that she did not have long for this world. One day while Jasper was sitting alone by her bedside to watch over her she sprang out of bed with a whoop. "Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!" she shouted. She exclaimed she had heard heavenly voices of sweet peace and good cheer. Jasper shouted in alarm. His mother's face was shining with happiness as she told him that she was to get well and see all of her children grown. Not long after that she was baptized in the O'Kaw River.

Jasper had never read William James and this was his first experience with psychological religious phenomena. He was duly impressed.

Jasper's father became sheriff of Shelby County and a factor in local politics. There was an old still-house near their home which facilitated vote getting, for the candidate who was most lavish with whiskey was usually elected. Soon the father was drinking more than was good for either himself or his family, and scenes of drunken beatings in the home became common. In his later days it was necessary to have him locked up in jail until his mad drunkenness had lessened its fury. The vividness of his father's raving aberrations were impressed upon Jasper's young mind.

Kegs of liquor were placed in the polling places all day, free for everyone to drink. By night everyone was drunk, including the judges and clerks of the election.

When Jasper was a boy it was customary for the neighbors to gather at his home on Christmas and New Year's day for a "whiskey stew" or spree. The big iron kettle used for making soap and washing clothes was turned into a mammoth punch bowl. Ten gallons of diluted sweetened whiskey was heated and men and women, boys and girls, all bailed out and drank great quantities of this potent brew. Preachers always had a drink before and after sermons from the ever present jug of whiskey in the home in which they stayed. Everyone drank if they could swallow.

Jasper once tended bar as a small boy, in a grocery store his father had opened. One day one of the neighbors who had been on a several day drunk drove up to the store for his last barrel of whiskey. The barrel was loaded onto his sled and he got astride it and shouting out "This is my coffin!" drove home.

The neighbor drank as much of the contents of the barrel as he could unaided, then went to bed and summoned the doctor. The doctor prescribed more weakened whiskey to keep the patient alive, and Jasper sat by his bed feeding him whiskey by the spoonful until the poor fellow died of acute alcoholism. Jasper was alarmed and would not sell any more whiskey in the store.

One of the clear recollections of Jasper's boyhood was that of Lincoln as he first saw him seated on the verandah of the old hotel across from the court-house in Shelbyville. Feet cocked up on the railing or lanky legs doubled up under the rungs of the chair, Lincoln read his book or paper, or chatted with the farmers and fellow attorneys.

While Jasper was still a boy his father took him to the county court-house to hear Lincoln make a campaign speech. In

those days it was customary for politicians and even lawyers in court to heap personal abuse and ridicule upon the heads of their opponents. Jasper expected to be entertained with a barrage of denunciations directed at the opponent in the election. He was surprised at the pleasant joking manner and kindly spirit with which Lincoln treated those who objected to his ideas.

"I do not remember any words of that speech.....; but I shall never forget how he looked and the manner in which he spoke or how patient he was toward his cross critics. I went home and told my mother that I had heard a lawyer and a politician speak without talking harshly or abusing anybody. I had never witnessed the like before in my life." [1]

Jasper had met for the first time in his life a real liberal and without fully comprehending what it meant was emotionally converted to a way of life he sensed was higher.

The boy Jasper, nevertheless, broke out in no spectacular changes of personality. He was an integral part of the pioneer life in which he lived. He had vague emotional stirrings within him that directed him toward a preaching career that would emulate his great-grandfather's; he had been moved by the sight of a cruel slavery; he was becoming afraid of intemperate drinking, and he had glimpsed a liberal spirit in action, but still he went on with his farm chores.

When he was about sixteen he had long practiced the

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1. Jasper Douthit's Story, p.50
This speech of Lincoln was probably a part of his successful campaign for United States Congressman in 1847 when Jasper was 13 years old.

farming custom of taking a drink of whiskey in the morning for the health's sake. It was believed that a dram of whiskey before breakfast would prevent the ague and "milk sickness" which were prevalent diseases in the early days. The habit grew until it was necessary to take a dram before meals, then in between meals, in stormy and cold weather, and in hot weather. In the harvest field whiskey had to be taken every time a man drank water to prevent typhoid.

Once in the haying field Jasper drank too much and became mildly drunk. When he sobered up he was ashamed he had proven so unmanly before his fellow workers and resolved not to drink again. He was ridiculed by the neighbors as a temperance fanatic. Jasper had never heard a temperance lecture, but he knew he did not want anything to do with a force he could not govern, and that kept him from being a man. It was a hard fight, but he kept the resolution and in a hard drinking community never drank again.

The vague stirrings of his spirit were beginning to focus. He loved the people with whom he lived, but he felt that there was a better life than theirs and he intended to find it.

There was no one older to guide him, but in those books read by the light of the lard lamp he had sensed the direction. It was in more books - an education. Wholeheartedly he sought more knowledge and all the strength he could summon was to be called upon if he was to accomplish even the elements of what now is open to everyone.

## CHAPTER III

## JASPER SEEKS AN EDUCATION

"My first hard battle was the struggle for an education." Jasper has said in his memoirs.[i] His mother had taught him to read from the family Bible and he had committed to memory the seventh verse of the fourth chapter of Proverbs: "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom and with all thy getting get understanding." Now he resolved to put this memorized verse into practice and this was no easy task.

The itinerant Baptist preachers were often entertained in his father's house and during their visits condemned all book knowledge except that of the Bible and business arithmetic as being of the devil. If a boy learned to read, write and "figure" enough to carry on a business, that was sufficient. Jasper's father was of the same opinion. In spite of the boy's begging for school his father had allowed him but two weeks of the year for an education. The rest of the time was spent in farming. Jasper read and re-read the few books in the house and grew more and more dissatisfied with his slow progress in things of the mind.

Sunday was the day of rest and Jasper had the day off. Without anyone knowing he went into the forest and cut enough cordwood to buy books. He ordered some books from New York City to be sent by express, and after days of anxious waiting received a notice from the express office at Springfield, sixty miles away, that the books had arrived.

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i. Jasper Douthit's Story. p.26

Jasper's father was the tax collector of the county and made occasional trips to Springfield with the taxes in gold and silver in a covered wagon. He asked his father to bring the box of books back with him on one of these trips. Perhaps the father thought the books might be full of dangerous heresy, at any rate he left the books safe in Springfield.

Jasper felt that he had been greatly wronged and found the hired man a sympathetic listener. The hired man was illiterate and had spent all his money on sprees. Now he felt that he had something better for which to live and offered his month's wages to the boy, counselling him to get his books and stay away until he had an education. He gave him three silver dollars and wished him good luck as Jasper walked away from home to find his books and his education.

The stage coach to Springfield passed ten miles away from the farm and Jasper trudged along, arriving at the stand late at night, cold and hungry. The passengers made room for him and questioned him about his trip. He told them his purpose and most of them told him to go home, that he was doing wrong. Jasper was grateful for one man who told him he was doing right and hoped he would grow into a useful man.

About daybreak the coach arrived in Springfield and as soon as the express office opened Jasper was there to claim his package of books. The bald-headed express agent watched the lad unpack first some books on self-education and the laws of health, then his eyes bulged to see coming from the wood shavings a glistening porcelain bust. The head of this bust was mapped out carefully with numbers lettered in each section,

and the base of the bust had a key to the numbers. Young Jasper was now provided with the means of reading the character of all comers by means of this phrenological bust.

The bald-headed express agent questioned his early morning client and, learning that he had run away from home to get an education, was alarmed. Looking at the glistening well-labeled phrenological bust, then at the young man before him, he shook his head ominously and said "My lad, you better go back to your mother."

It may have been good advice, for of the three silver dollars the hired man had lent him twenty-eight cents were left. Jasper walked around the streets of the state capital in utter amazement at the signs. Over one store there was the sign "Bookbinding and Store" and in went Jasper to meet a scene he had believed impossible - hundreds of books. The owner of the shop talked with him and offered him an apprenticeship in bookbinding for a year at board and room for wages. It looked like the ideal place to secure that precious education.

Jasper went out on the street to think it over, hesitating to be bound for a year to a stranger. Soon he met a short bowlegged man who fell into conversation with him. He asked him if he wanted a job driving oxen hitched to a dirt scraper on the railroad at nine dollars per month. Jasper accepted and too late discovered that the place of employment was on the Illinois Central Railroad then in construction sixteen miles west of his father's home in Shelbyville. The next morning at sunrise Jasper set his face into its first rays and started the forty-five mile walk to the new job. The

short railroad foreman was to bring the precious box of books after him. By noon he had walked twenty miles, and weary and faint called at a one-room cabin for water. The good woman gave him a piece of gooseberry pie and a cup of milk. When he told her he could not pay for it, she said "You are very welcome to what I have" .

By nightfall he was still four or five miles from his destination and the night was too dark to follow the dim trail through the prairie grass. There was a round-log cabin in a little grove and he applied there for lodging.

A kindly faced woman answered his halloo.

"I don't like to turn away strangers," she said, "but my old man went hunting and hasn't got back."

The boy pleaded for shelter and finally she said, "I haven't the heart to turn you off in the dark. You might be lost and the wolves get you. Come in!"

Later the husband returned with some venison, and early the next morning they breakfasted on fried venison, corn bread and milk. Jasper tried to pay for the night's bed and breakfast. "Oh," said the man, "we never charge strangers."

Very soon that morning he arrived at the railroad line for work. It was a short distance from where the city of Pana was afterward built. Jasper lived with the little overseer's family as did most of the Irish laborers. The woman noticed that Jasper's shirt was old and made him a new one. The Irishmen enjoyed his reading of Uncle Tom's Cabin, and his clumsy experiments on them as he practiced phrenological reading.

For the first month Jasper drove the oxen with the

scraper, but soon changed to shoveling dirt at so much per yard. It was a jolly life and everyone was a keen witted member of the same family.

Before Jasper had finished his contracted shoveling job he spied a covered wagon coming across the prairie with a tall, big shouldered man walking ahead. It was his grandfather. His father was driving the team. They had been to Springfield and picked up his trail. Grandfather told him his mother needed him and his father promised to give him a chance to go to the new Academy that was then being erected in Shelbyville if he would come home. Jasper promised he would as soon as his contract was finished.

It was not until nearly a year afterward that Jasper entered the Academy. In the spring of 1854 it was completed, Charles W.Jerome was secured as principal, and Jasper Douthit was in the first class to enter. The third declaration in its statements of purpose, while agreeing that the "Illinois Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church should appoint a board of annual visitors" went on - "No profession of religious faith shall be required of those who may become students therein, nor shall any sectarian doctrine of religion be taught therein".

Principal Jerome allowed Jasper to have a room in which he could cook and let him earn his tuition as janitor. Jasper also sold books for Fowler and Wells and managed to eke out an existence.

August 3,1854 the Shelby Academy had an "exhibition" of its powers as a seat of learning, and Jasper declaimed a

piece called "Perseverance" from a book by a Universalist minister, Rev. G.S.Weaver. February 22,1855 there was another exhibition and this time Jasper appeared on the quaintly printed program as "Valedictory, Jasper M.Douthit" . And if he was chagrined to have his middle initial changed, he must have been pleased to have the O'Kaw Patriot mention his name with middle initial correct and say that in its editorial opinion he had "evidenced fine powers of declamation ".[1]

Because of his eagerness and quick intelligence, Jasper was hired to continue the primary department during the summer vacation. An epidemic of cholera stopped this plan, but the next session of school Jasper was listed as "Teacher in the Preparatory Department".

The hired man who had made Jasper's education his own dear cause was a man of his word and continued to support his young protege. When he was sober the kind hearted fellow would come to the door, ask for "Jack" Douthit, and wait outside until he came to the door. Jasper's success as a newly appointed schocl teacher seemed to justify the hired man's dearest hopes. As he thrust a dollar or two into his young friend's protesting and gesticulating hands he would say: "Never mind if you never pay it. I'm a sinner and never had any larnin' , but I want you to be larned. Maybe you'll be President some day" .

Jasper once owed him twenty-five dollars and under the hired man's deep protestations managed to pay him back. This hired man was finally killed in the Civil War.

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[1] Shelbyville Seminary Manual, p.15

While Jasper was teaching at the Academy he heard of Horace Mann, President of Antioch College, and longed to study under this man he had come to love and respect without seeing. In the autumn of 1856 Jasper resigned his position as teacher and started out for Antioch.

His friends in Shelbyville thought that it was a great mistake for one so promising to be lead into Horace Mann heresies and tried to dissuade him from his intention. The Methodist minister having failed to swerve his stubborn young friend from the path to destruction at least received his promise that he would stop to see Dr.Curry, President of Asbury University (now DePauw) on his way. Dr. Curry promised to allow him to work part of his way in school, and Jasper went down to the railroad station to think about it.

While Jasper was weighing the advantages of having a certainty of food and clothing at Asbury against the uncertainties of a living plus Horace Mann at Antioch, a motherly woman spoke to him and introduced her husband, Professor Butler of Wabash College. They listened to his story of an eager search for learning and his now definitely formed desire to be a minister. They were pleased to meet with such spirit and promised him an opportunity to work his way through Wabash. He liked them, and the next day walked the thirty miles over to Crawfordsville, Indiana, from Greencastle.

For six months Jasper lived on baked potatoes, graham bread, and milk. His clothes were of homespun, he was awkward in appearance, bashful and completely homesick. His professors said he could go home for a visit if he would return to complete

his work and go to Lane Theological Seminary, Cincinnati,Ohio. Jasper accepted provided he would not have to enter the ministry of any particular sect, and looked forward to his newly mapped career.

When he arrived at home, he found his father otherwise disposed. He thought his son would make a better stock dealer or merchant and was strongly opposed to an educated preacher in the family. He learned of his elder son's plans with disgust and offered to establish him in the book and drug business if he would stop going to these infernal schools.

Jasper records: "I yielded to temptation and so dealt in books and drugs for a year. But," he adds with the spirit that makes for real ministers, "I still wanted to be a preacher."[1]

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[1] Jasper Douthit's Story, p.41

## CHAPTER IV

## JASPER IS MARRIED

In the midst of his loneliness at Wabash Jasper had read some poetry by a certain Miss Emily Lovell of East Abington, Massachusetts, and for the first time in his life felt that there was someone who could understand and speak the ideals of his own heart. Miss Lovell had come from colonial New England stock, attended Mount Caesar Seminary in Keene, New Hampshire, and contributed poetry and stories to the Universalist Ladies Monthly Magazine and the New York Evening Post when that paper was edited by William Cullen Bryant. Her verse was deeply mystical and mirrored a comely soul yearning after truth and human service.

Jasper was entranced and wrote her a letter of appreciation. Soon they were corresponding regularly and pouring out to each other their dreams and aspirations toward a life of more usefulness and meaning than either of them had seen about them.

Miss Lovell wrote in one of her poems of a magic hand leading her into a magnificent way of life and service. She wanted to be a missionary. Her religion was deeply humanitarian as was Jasper's. The following stanza is the last one of her poem A Prayer :

" Guide Thou my deeds!
Teach me, O Lord how rightly to discern
The wants my humble means may well supply;
I've gathered roses, and I fain would turn
Upon another's brow their grace to lie.
The wine of life with willing hands I'd serve
To needy objects; Father can it be?

"With heaven-born strength wilt Thou
my spirit nerve,
And guide my deeds, that they may honor
thee. " [1]

In another poem, Life's Flowers, there are these verses quoted in part:

"As through the narrow crowded streets
Of Life I wended my way,
Musing, I said, in a listless mood,
I'll gather me a bouquet.

A feeble old man with tottering steps
Already nigh to the grave,
Who chanced to be walking near my side,
Fell down on the slippery pave.

I went to him, for his bruises cared,
To his humble home then led;
As I turned, within my hand I found
A rose of richest red.

I knew there was healing in my hand,
If its power was guided right
I could raise a soul to sunshine gay
Now shrouded in blackest night." [2]

Jasper was in love with her. He had never seen her, but her soul was beautiful. He made perhaps one of the strangest proposals of marriage the modern world has ever known. After telling her of his love, he suggested that their fitness for one another be decided by the phrenologist, L.N.Fowler. They both sent their ambrotypes to this fool-hardy gentleman and let him decide the issue.

"Professor" Fowler reported that the girl would make a better wife for Jasper than he a husband for her, and further stated: "The young lady is of high moral character, and she is talented, domestic, affable, playful and very affectionate; but

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1-2 From a Mss. in the author's possession.

she is a timid soul, and it would nearly kill her to be scolded. However, if you make up your mind to be largely guided by her counsel and conform to her nature, you can spend a happy, useful and mutually helpful life together."

Jasper's reading listed such bad qualities as a quick temper and inordinate stubbornness. He was dismayed. How could he ever be worthy of such a fine woman? He told her of his misgivings, but they met and were married in East Abington, Massachusetts, November 2,1857 by Varnum Lincoln, a Universalist minister.

This marriage was the most important event in Jasper's life. From this point the story is not of one man but of two souls united in a more noble effort of living than either one could have realized individually. Emily Lovell brought a deep emotional mysticism to the union that sweetened Jasper's impulsive temper. She brought a wealth of culture and poetry into the practical personality of a backwoodsman. It was she who gave background to a life that was apt to be all foreground.

She was not merely the cultured and poetic woman, but the daring, courageous, enduring soul as well. Jasper said of her with sincerity. "To this woman, under God, I owe most of what I have been and what I have done for good for nearly fifty years." [1]

Jasper and his wife went to Hillsboro, Illinois, after their marriage, where Jasper had secured the position of school superintendent.

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1 Jasper Douthit's Story, p.45

School teaching was not a happy career for this dynamic young man and his humanitarian wife. They both longed for more direct missionary labors and a chance to serve more needy people. They stayed in Hillsboro during the school year of 1858 and then returned to East Abington,Massachusetts.

During the stay at Hillsboro Jasper saw Lincoln for the last time and heard him speak during his campaign against Senator Douglas. The two men did not actually meet at Hillsboro. Douglas had made his speech to a huge crowd in a grove during clear weather, a few days before Lincoln arrived. Lincoln appeared on a day that was cloudy and threatened rain and a circus tent was engaged for him.

Jasper sat at the far end of the tent and watched the tall ungainly Lincoln he had known as a boy walk down toward the rostrum. The people crowded around him, but he seemed a head taller than the rest; as he started to speak the rain pelted down on the sagging canvas and splashed over the people sitting near the tent walls. They left their seats and stood close to their own backwoods candidate. Someone suggested they stop the meeting until the rain was over, but by this time Lincoln's homely face had lighted up with his thoughts and the crowd shouted "Oh, no. Go on, go on!"

Lincoln did "go on" for nearly two hours. When he spoke of Senator Douglas's theory of Popular Sovereignty as being "about as thin as the soup made from the shadow of a starved pigeon" , the crowd roared in laughter. When he said "There is an honest old man down in Georgia by the name of Toombs. He boasts that he will call the roll of his slaves

at the foot of Bunker Hill monument. Dear fellow, he little knows the temper of the Northern people upon the subject of slavery, or he would never make such a boast as that." , the people felt an ominous threat fall upon them.

Jasper Douthit was a man full grown now. His emotional thrill as a boy at the sight of Lincoln was reinforced with ideas. From this time on Lincoln was the great ideal of his life. The greatest compliment that could be paid to Jasper after this was to say he either looked or spoke like Lincoln.

The rumblings about slavery had by this time turned into loud thunder. At Peoria, when Lincoln had accepted the senatorial nomination, he had stated the issue clearly and dramatically: "A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved - I do not expect the house to fall - but I expect that it will cease to be divided." [1] Speaking in the name of his party, Lincoln claimed that slavery is a moral wrong. October 15,1858, Lincoln spoke at Alton, Illinois, in debate with Douglas - "Judge Douglas may say he cares not whether slavery is voted up or down, but he must have a choice between a right thing and a wrong thing. He contends that whatever community wants slaves has a right to have them. So they have, if it is not wrong; but if it is wrong he cannot say people have a right to do wrong." [2]

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[1] J.T.Adams, Epic of America, p.248

[2] Grierson, The Valley of Shadow, p.200

The gauntlet had been flung down to a nation on an issue that was a moral one. Jasper Douthit secretly volunteered to stand with Abraham Lincoln.

## CHAPTER V

## JASPER GOES TO BOSTON

In 1859 Jasper went to Boston to take a position with Fowler and Wells, phrenologists and book publishers. For six months he sold their books and for six months he lectured on the "Science of Man and the Laws of Health" along the coast between Boston and Plymouth.

Phrenology was to his day what psycho-analysis has been to the early twentieth century. It was a very popular form of what was supposedly the science of psychology. The mystery of man's mind has and perhaps will always fascinate man. Jasper was enthusiastic about this search and spoke to no less enthusiastic audiences.

Jasper was now twenty-five years old, over six feet tall and weighed only one hundred and thirty pounds. He wore his black hair and beard in the flowing style and his dark, brilliant and piercing eyes completed the caricature of a hypnotist.

He soon had the reputation of being an expert in the phrenological reading of character and he constantly used hypnotism at his lectures. During one of these lectures and demonstrations an event, the exact details of which are missing from the record, so frightened him that he became convinced that he was dealing with a force which he could not understand, a force which was not only mysterious but extremely dangerous to rest in the hands of a single person. Without knowing where his next meal might come from he made a resolution never to hypnotize or use phrenology again, and in the same manner that he kept his promise never to drink he kept this one. His nature knew no

moderation. Once committed to a course he followed it completely, almost fanatically.

At twenty-five Jasper was a religious wanderer. Boston was full of two preachments, spiritism and anti-slavery.

Spiritism had interested him for a while but he had thrown this off with his pseudo-psychology. Now abolition took up his attention. He was thrilled to see Thomas Starr King and Henry Ward Beecher walking together; they were heroes to him. He searched out William Lloyd Garrison and Wendell Phillips and talked with them about abolition.

No one who lived in Boston in those days could ever avoid Theodore Parker and the mighty spirit that was flung from his great pulpit. Jasper was first drawn to him as a preacher against slavery, but soon he had read those two powerful sermons on "The Permanent and Transient in Christianity" and "The False and True Revival of Religion" . He read the sermons of James Freeman Clarke because he had heard that Dr.Clarke was the only minister in Boston who had dared to exchange pulpits with Theodore Parker. Jasper was in a state of transition from the old theology to the new. Many had never been able to make the jump. Clarke and Parker helped him over. His wife, who was a real liberal, steadied his new position.

He lived sixteen miles from Parker's church and when he heard that Parker was to preach his last sermon before he left for Italy, as it transpired, to die, Jasper made the attempt to hear him. He had no carfare and tried to walk the sixteen miles. Half way there he had grown weak because of a temporary illness and could not go on - "to regret the rest of my life that I did not start the day before, in order to improve the only opportunity

to see and hear the man whose printed words had revived in me new life and hope."[1]

October, 1859, the year Jasper was in Boston, John Brown of Kansas lead thirteen white men and five negroes on a successful attempt to seize the Federal Arsenal at Harper's Ferry, Virginia. The fanatical Brown, when he was captured and hanged, presented a striking figure of physical dignity which captivated the emotional North. The South was frightened to the bone at the sight of negroes bearing arms. The divided house was beginning to totter.

Just after this historical event Jasper and his wife, now parents of one child, returned to Shelbyville,Illinois. He had learned many things in Boston, but financially he had failed. The family was established in a shack which Jasper and his brother built on their father's land.

Their new home was later used for a hencoop. It was a tiny one-room affair with an open fireplace.

Mrs. Douthit cheerfully moved in with her baby and, pushing her Boston culture far back in her mind, started to learn the duties of a frontier housewife. She made a garden and the first year made enough money raising turkeys to keep the family out of debt.

The first time Jasper found a chance to speak in public he announced that he was an abolitionist. All his friends and relatives were deeply shocked. No one in the community had ever before admitted that they were one of these monstrous people. The rumor traveled rapidly about the county that Jasper

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[1] Jasper Douthit's Story, p.54

Douthit had married a Yankee wife and turned abolitionist. The newspapers made a sensation of it, reporting that he had called John Brown a martyr and compared him with Washington.

Actually Jasper had merely pointed out that everyone should be careful how they judged people who had become unpopular; that even George Washington would not have been judged a great man if his one time unpopularity was taken into account. The remark was misconstrued as being veiled praise of John Brown and for years afterward he was called a "John Brownite" in spite of the truth that Jasper had no sympathy with this fanatic man, saying, "I did not at all approve of his bloody raid at Harper's Ferry." [1]

Jasper had perhaps misled the people when he announced that he was an abolitionist. He did want to see the slaves freed, but he was not precipitate about it. He did not ally himself with any group but pleaded for free speech and an opportunity for all to speak their minds. He believed that if the issues were presented clearly and openly discussed the people would solve the problem without any more trouble than a good argument. Here was a real liberal mind at work.

Unfortunately the newspapers were not of the same opinion. They believed the way to settle the problem was to suppress the side with which they did not agree and exaggerate the side with which they did agree.

In the early summer of 1860 Jasper wrote a half column which he called "Play Fair in Politics" and sent it to the O'Kaw Democrat for p ublication. He expected that the editor, who

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[1] Jasper Douthit's Story, p.56

was a personal friend of his, would of course admit the article, but the editor replied that while he had no personal objections he could not print the communication because of the political party to which he belonged, adding "if you take any decided stand against the old party, I shall be compelled to denounce you publicly" . Jasper did take a decided stand, but there was no paper that would print his ideas.

July 28,1860 a frail, stooped printer came to Shelbyville. His name was E.E.Chittenden and his looks belied his courageous spirit. Before many days his paper the Freeman was in circulation, advocating Abraham Lincoln for President and carrying an article by its new associate editor Jasper Douthit, entitled "Play Fair in Politics" . Chittenden and his tall lanky associate editor brought the paper out weekly until Lincoln was inaugurated, the flag on Fort Sumter fluttered down and the call came for volunteers. Then Mr. Chittenden enlisted and the first paper in central Illinois devoted to free soil, free labor and free speech died.

Jasper immediately enlisted from Shelby County in the Union army and went to the state capital, this time by railroad train instead of by stage coach as in his runaway boyhood. The army physician in Springfield examined this pale faced associate news editor and saw that he was woefully underweight for a man of his height. He shook his head doubtfully.

That night Jasper thought of his mother who was expected to die soon, his wife who had but three years experience as a frontierswoman, and their child Helen, and another to be born shortly. Several of his friends, including his old teacher at the Academy, Charles W.Jerome, counseled him to go back home and

fight for the right there. The next day he returned to Shelbyville with the army medical Department's disapproval and dismissal.

In the spring of 1836 Jasper ran afoul of the Knights of the Golden Circle, a secret organization whose intention was to resist the draft and further the interests of the Confederacy. Outwardly it professed to be seeking for peace and democracy. Most people who wanted peace were misled by this outfit and allowed many "bushwackers" from the south to come into Illinois. One of these who claimed to be a preacher came into Shelbyville to hold meetings in a log cabin called Liberty Meeting-house.

Liberty Meeting-house had been built for a church, school and any other public meeting the community desired, and Jasper Douthit had been largely responsible for its erection. He had solicited funds about the district, stipulating carefully that the house should be open to everyone and always sacred to free speech.

The Missouri bushwacker organized about twenty men into the local chapter of the Knights of the Golden Circle and besides secret meetings held open meetings to which the public was invited. In the open meetings the speaker held forth on peace and union.

Jasper went to one of the meetings and saying that he was in sympathy with a movement for peace and true democracy asked permission to take less than ten minutes of their time in reading a letter from a patriotic Democrat, Major General Rosencrans and a short article from the Chicago Times, the leading Democratic paper of Illinois. Since both the Times and Rosencrans had condemned the Golden Circle organizations,

the chair was wary.

The head knight apparently knew little of knightly courtesy. He replied that "This here meeting is a private affair to reorganize the Democratic party and if the gentleman is anxious to exercise free speech he can go out to the bush and bellow forth!"

Action matched the speech and Jasper was thrown out. The floor having cleared of all nuisances, the so-called preacher from Missouri delivered a stirring speech which would never have been recorded except that George Douthit, Jasper's younger brother, had been so quiet and sleepy looking that no one noticed him, and he had been left unmolested in the midst of the "peace" meeting.

The speech in part was this: "Had it not been for such weak-kneed cowardly traitors (the Douglas Democrats) we should have had the tyrant Lincoln dethroned long ago, yea, verily, and beheaded. I tell you we must prepare to fight.

"Clean out your old guns and get ready. If you have no gun, go up North and press one, and while you are there press a horse and ammunition.

"If we can't fight on a large scale, we can bushwack it. If you don't know how I can teach you. I have had some experience in bushwacking myself."

Brother George remembered the speech word for word, told Jasper, and assisted him in preparing a report for the paper.

The editor of the single paper that was then published in the county rejected it, not on the grounds that it was not accurate, but that such a report might make for more black Republicans.

Jasper then sent it to the St.Louis Democrat, a Republican daily widely read throughout Shelby County, and March 19,1863 it appeared in the press under flaming headlines. The article was copied by other papers in the country and in the county of Shelby the moment was tense.

The Knights of the Golden Circle admitted that Jasper had "got it mighty korect" but no one knew how he had done it. They decided that after he had been thrown out of the meeting he must have climbed through the roof and listened at the scuttle hole in the loft. No one suspected brother George.

Resolutions were passed and vigilance committees were formed to warn him that any more such activities would lead directly to his hanging as a spy, and the Circle in order to avoid government arrest were forced to deny the story in the papers. They prepared an article signed by nine men for the local O'Kaw Patriot of June 12,1863, which extolled the Missourian as an honorable "school teacher, gentleman, patriot and peacemaker" , declared the report of Douthit as false, and concluded:

"With a brief history of the author of the article in the Democrat we close. He is the son of a respectable Democrat citizen of the neighborhood. In his better days he went to Boston to attend school and received a stroke of negrophobia which fractured his brain. He is a man of small caliber. He is regarded by those who know him as maliciously dangerous to the community. He pays homage to John Brown. This Bostonian Jasper is a breeder of sedition and is daily seeking the life blood of our country. He should be cautioned by those who have any influence over him, if any such there be, and if he persists in such conduct his presence may become unendurable."

The manifesto was picturesque, but in deadly earnest. Jasper's trip to Boston was bearing fruit, or perhaps growing into a tree from whose branches he was in danger of hanging.

## CHAPTER VI

## MORE WAR-TIME EXCITEMENT

In 1864 Lincoln started to raise a Union army by a general draft and the people of Shelby County oiled up their rifles and long barrelled revolvers, not for use in the Union army, but for deadly use against any enrolling officer who dared to carry out his President's command. Frequent riots were the order of the day in southern Illinois as men resisted the draft, and several enrolling officers were shot. The Knights of the Golden Circle started drilling within sight of Jasper's cabin home to "dethrone the tyrant Lincoln" .

Jasper tried to talk with his neighbors about the dangerous situation they had made, but they were hard-lipped and silent.

In the midst of these trying conditions Lincoln appointed Jasper Douthit to take the enrollment of the eastern half of the county and offered a company of soldiers to be stationed in the county for his protection.

Jasper decided to accept the commission but not the soldiers. He had observed that whenever and wherever soldiers had been stationed in a county,rioting and bloodshed had been their accompanying result. He was advised to go heavily armed, but refused this advice. If he could not do this task peacefully he would not do it at all. Persuasive friendliness, the mark of the true liberal, was Jasper's method.

Unfortunately the Missouri bushwacker's newspaper manifesto and malicious rumors about Jasper had done their combined work. It was generally believed that "the black-hearted

Abe" had sent a consignment of arms and ammunition to Jasper and that these lethal articles were the invisible furniture of the log-cabin home. Jasper was supposed to be living in an arsenal.

Children heard their parents talk and were perhaps frightened into being good by the threat of Jasper Douthit, the bogey man. When they saw the lanky Jasper striding down the road the little children hid behind trees.

When errands took grown up men past Jasper's home they first armed themselves and then waited until after dark before they made this extremely dangerous trip.

Jasper knew full well the sentiment against him and while he believed in doing things peacefully and with a liberal's courage, he was not going to be foolhardy. Each day he started out on his job of enrolling with a different horse and a change of hat and coat. This precaution probably saved his life. Many people had resolved to shoot him on sight, and long years afterward one man said "I shall always be thankful that we didn't know you were around until you had done the work and gone" .[1]

Jasper had worked out a plan of battle. He decided that if he could see the people whose level-headedness could be relied upon, he could get from them the names of the others. This worked well, - after the first morning.

The first morning Jasper visited a farm house and asked to see the man. His wife sent the children out into the field for their father and soon he came in at a dog trot, yanked a gun from the rack over the door, pointed it at Jasper, and swore mightily. His picturesque explosions having subsided in frequency, he grasped

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[1] Jasper Douthit's Story, p.67

his gun tightly and invited the government enrollment officer to get out or be shot!

Jasper, as quietly as possible under the circumstances, pointed out that his death would accomplish little since there were many more men to fill his place and furthermore it was not considered according to the rules to shoot an unarmed man. The farmer relented and relaxed his trigger finger, but warned him that someone else would shoot him anyhow.

This was almost a prophecy. A few nights later rifles cracked out around the Douthit cabin and the whining soft nosed bullets splattered through the open door. After a-dozen shots Jasper shouted that he was coming out and fully expecting to be at least wounded, but wanting to keep his family safe, he went to the door in his night clothes.

He did not reckon on his terrible reputation. On his appearance the shooters took to the hazel thickets in mortal fear.

Soon after this attempt on his life Jasper met an old friend of his, now a captain home on furlough. The Captain insisted that Douthit was obligated to protect himself for his friends' and his family's sake and gave him a long-barrelled six-shooter.

Jasper saw that the gun was fully loaded and gingerly stuck it in a pocket and went home for target practice. He set up an object the size of a man, stepped back ten paces and carefully fired six shots at it. When he examined the target he found that he had missed it every time he fired. Laughing at himself for his foolishness in ever taking the gun, he made haste to return it. This as he says "was the extent of my carnal warfare during the unpleasantness" .[1]

[1] Ibid, p.69

Jasper's advisor on armaments, the captain, was not his only friend during these days of social ostracism. Jasper was preaching under peculiar conditions which we shall see better in the next chapter. One Sunday Jasper had gathered a congregation in the little log schoolhouse to hear a sermon on " The True Path to Peace" . Jasper's sermons and his prayers for the President of the United States had elicited many threats and this Sunday the morning sunlight glistened on the shotguns, rifles, revolvers and bowie knives of a surly crowd who were there to carry out their threats.

Silently the congregation filed into the house and filled it. A deathlike quiet was upon the group and not even a whisper was heard as Douthit went to his seat in the pulpit.

Outside the mob started to rumble and shout. Inside there was only silent expectancy.

From the back of the room a small conservative man who had never taken an active part in the meetings arose and walked down the aisle. Jasper decided that he would not listen to any advice to give up the meeting, but go on anyway, but when the quiet little man leaned over to whisper, his message was surprising. He said "Douthit, go on and preach and pray as you think right. There are plenty of us to stand by you." [1]

Few of the people in Shelbyville could read and those who could were responsible for the public duty of reading aloud the war news from the newspapers. One old man who was then a boy remembers the neighbors gathering about his father's fireside to hear him read about the latest events of the war.

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[1] Ibid, p.72

Under these conditions it was natural that news should become perverted in meaning and rumors should have as much credence as facts. Probably this business of slow moving news and willful propaganda accounted largely for the unpopularity of Jasper's position. Emotionalism and bigotry could not help but be the deciding factors of the day and in this situation it is always a hard fight for liberals and a paradise for demagogues who work only on ignorance and prejudice.

About this time Jasper has recorded in a diary this incident, which well illustrates the conditions of the day: A man had been to town and heard some talk about peace conferences and some Democratic victories at the polls in New York and Indiana and his impression of the talk was surprisingly romantic. When he met Douthit he exclaimed "Well, we're gwine to have peace. We've pinted a man, Vallandingham, to go see Jeff about arranging it, and if Old Abe don't give him a pass to ----. Where is it Jeff Davis lives?

"Richmond, do you mean?"

"Yes, that's the place. Well, if Old Abe don't give Vallandingham a pass to Richmond, as I was gwine to say, we're gwine to 'succeed' (secede) right off. They say New York and Indiana have 'succeeded' already. Hurrah for Vallandingham! "

Everything seemed against him. The time was out of joint for liberals, but a true liberal seldom lets that cut down his steam. Whenever he found the opportunity to speak and give impetus to the ideas he believed to be true, he did it with enthusiasm.

Once at a meeting he had just made a strong denouncing

statement about slavery, a drunken listener yelled,"That's a damn lie and I came here to kill this here abolitionist preacher." He pulled out a bowie knife and started for the rostrum. Two or three boys wrestled him down, disarmed him, stuck him on his horse and sent him galloping for home.

Jasper had many good reasons to stay at home in peace, but he struggled on, finished the enrollment, preached his message and finally received the news that Lee, the gallant gentleman, had met Grant, an equally gallant victor, and the war was over. A short time before the surrender at Appomatox Lincoln had offered Douthis the position of postmaster at Shelbyville, and he had refused the appointment believing that he had other work to do.

Now came more news. Lincoln had been assassinated by a half-crazed killer. The man who had been a living example of a liberal was dead. Jasper for the first time in his manhood wept. A nation mourned. All historians shall be sad for ever at Lincoln's passing, for the dark days that followed might not have been had that great heart of honest religion continued to beat.

Jasper was not a historian nor a seer, but he felt surer than ever that he had work to do.

## CHAPTER VII

## JASPER BECOMES A UNITARIAN

During the war-time excitement Jasper had been preaching regularly although he had not been ordained nor was he a church member. He said that he could not remember when he did not feel that he was not called to be a minister, but he could not find a church that would allow him to interpret religion as his own conscience dictated.

When Jasper had gone to the Academy in Shelbyville, he had been a very lonely and bashful young man. One night he went into a Methodist camp meeting in the town and heard a sermon that seemed to be directed at him. After the sermon the preacher announced that any who wanted to be Christians could come forward and kneel at the altar and the congregation would "pray them through" . The lonely boy arose from his seat in the last row of the pews and feeling that he was making his debut into grown up society walked to the altar rail and knelt. The congregation sang hymns and prayed fervently.

The minister was encouraged by this catch in the first casting of the net and announced a meeting for the next night; on that evening a dozen young people joined Jasper at the rail. The meetings continued and grew noisy with shoutings and exaltation in song. It was too noisy for Jasper. He noticed that those who made the most noise were the least moral men and women. He was disgusted and stayed away. The meetings went on; hundreds of converts were made, but Jasper was not among them. Committees were sent to persuade him to return to the meetings, but he was stubborn. One of the great revivals of the day, Jasper had

started in his loneliness but he was destined to remain lonely in spite of it.

While Jasper was a teacher at the Academy he had preached at private meetings which he had arranged in the school house. One year before the war he had solicited funds and built the Liberty meeting-house where a short time later he started his duel with the Knights of the Golden Circle. He preached continually during the war as we have seen, but always his sermons promoted a religion that denominations found it hard to appreciate.

Jasper had tried to be an orthodox Christian, but it was impossible for him to build up the proper mind set. He had always admired his mother's religion and was worried that he had never had the conversion experience she had known. Once he told his grandfather his fears about himself because of his lack of emotional religious experience.

His grandfather thought about it and finally said, "Why, Jasper, you should not make such ado and be asking God to give you the same experience your mother had. St.John gives the simple test of how we may know that we have religion. He says, ' We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren.' Now if you know that you love the brethren, you've got religion."

Jasper knew he loved the brethren. He knew he had religion!

With this humanitarian basis of religion it was natural that while he was in Boston he had had no interest in theological doctrine. He had met and heard the liberals of the day and never questioned them about their conceptual thinking. One thing interested him: what could religion do for the brethren he loved.

Abolition of slavery was their answer, and this was for the time his religious creed.

His experience with men who drank almost between drinks and his own father's raving, violent, drunken frenzies had as we have seen gradually led him to hate this evil.

His experience during the war convinced him that the evil behind all evils was ignorance and its companion, lack of intelligent sympathy.

Because he loved the brethren, he hated slavery and liquor. Because he loved the brethren, he thought education was the only way to lead them into a better and happier life.

Religion as it was represented around about him was not religion to him. He had heard the visiting preachers in his father's house denounce education and uphold a doctrine of predestination that meant nothing but social and moral drift. He had seen preachers whose main job in life was heresy hunting. Congregations were split over such issues as whether God made the Devil or the Devil made himself. There were controversies of a bitter and acidulous sort and people thrown out of church in a spirit of hatred because they did not agree about the doctrine of communion or baptism. Nowhere did a church uphold first human character.

Jasper loved the brethren and the churches hated all men who did not agree with them. There could be no reconciliation. Jasper could never be an orthodox preacher; he was too kind hearted and too fundamentally religious. Yet Jasper felt called to preach and he knew he had work to do.

Without any ecclesiastical backing and with wild rumors in circulation about him Jasper started to preach the message of

morality. He was not a Christian in the sense that he preached about Jesus, but he was in the sense that he tried to follow and preach the spirit of Jesus.

He says of his preaching in this period that it " was for Union, Liberty, Charity, Temperance and Righteousness in religion and through the nation" .[1] His wife was sometimes fearful that he had left too much of tolerance and beauty out of his preaching. She knew Jasper loved the brethren but too much in the fashion of a stern father. He would swing his fist down into his other hand and speak with great indignation as he thought of the evils around him.

Emily led him gently along. One Sunday she picked some wild flowers and set them before the desk in the schoolhouse where Jasper was to preach. One of the old men in the congregation pitched them out of the window in anger. No flowers should desecrate the hour of church. This was the first time flowers appeared in a church in Shelby County.

Emily had often heard Thomas Wentworth Higginson preach and she greatly admired Theodore Parker. These men were Unitarians. She believed that a denomination that could be large enough in love and purpose to hold these men would be large enough for Jasper.

The couple consulted together and Emily urged her husband to write to Higginson and ask if he could be ordained taking no other belief than the "spirit of Jesus" as his one measure. Higginson replied in a friendly letter which instructed him to see "Robert Collyer, a noble man and a minister-at-large in

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1 Jasper Douthit's Story, p.81

Chicago. I don't know how radical he is, but he is a liberal, which is better". [1]

Jasper wrote a long letter to Robert Collyer telling him of all his trials and experiences, and soon received a letter from Collyer which invited Jasper to the Western Conference and sent him some books with this homily ending his letter: " But you need not wait until you have read certain books before you begin preaching; begin now. Begin as Paul did, right in the focus of your life. Get leave to preach in a schoolhouse for nothing and say just what is in your soul. There is no such school-master to bring us to books we want as preaching, no such college to educate a preacher." [2]

This was the beginning of a half century of the closest friendship between the two men.

The first exchange of letters took place in February 1862. May 23,1862, Collyer sent further instructions about the Conference.

"The Conference opens on the evening of the 19th of June at Detroit. You will need to be here the day before. Come to my house 295 Chicago Avenue and we will go down together. I hope we shall have a good time. Your letter was good and racy. Keep on preaching and the way will be open. Tell your story simply, bravely and lovingly, and you cannot fail to get sympathy and do good." [3]

Jasper went to Detroit with his new friend and there

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[1] From the letter quoted in Mss. of Jasper Douthit's Story.

[2] J.H.Hdmes : The Life and Letters of Robert Collyer, p.7

[3] Ibid, p.6

June 22,1862 he was ordained. Moncure D.Conway, Charles G.Ames, Thomas J.Mumford, George W.Hosmer and Robert Collyer took part in the service. Stimulated by good men and with a friend in Collyer, Douthit went back to his own country with his chin up and a new power in his desire to preach for those brethren he loved.

Shelbyville had gone through the war between the States, now had a railroad running through the town and a telegraph wire running to the outside world, but it was still the same old hard drinking, ignorant, backwoods place that it had been in earlier pioneering days. Jasper had work to do indeed.

Up to the time he was an ordained Unitarian minister there had never been a funeral in the place. When a person died he was thrust into a hold in the ground and months or years afterward the orthodox preacher would, in memory of the deceased, deliver a sermon that was a long harangue on some pet scripture quotation making no reference to the dead one.

Jasper was not allowed to preach in a church building, and he gathered the people in schoolhouses and groves, much as did the man whose example he tried to follow. He did not limit his work to Sundays, but preached every day he could find a few people who would listen.

Once he had gathered his congregation in a schoolhouse in the southern part of the county and as he looked at them he saw a small bowlegged man and his wife, the couple he had lived with years ago when he had worked on the railroad line. They remembered each other with great affection and after the service he sat at their table exchanging the stories of their adventures since parting.

Those who had armed themselves before passing his house

began to know him better and one by one apologized for their foolish actions.

One neighbor rode ten miles over to see him and told him that he had signed the Missouri bushwacker's manifesto and never read it. He had come to know Jasper better and asked his forgiveness.

There were happy incidents but this was a period of toil on his farm and in his pulpit. He was a new Paul earning his own way and preaching to the brethren. His new fellowship with the Unitarians he did not as yet fully understand and wrote often to Collyer and Collyer answered:

"You ask what I mean by our church being the worst and best for a new man? I will tell you. We never ask a man to state his belief in this or that dogma. We never bind a man to this or that form of worship. We never put him under any conference. He is a free man. We do not care whether he has ever entered a college or taken a degree. We meet him on the square. But our churches are only another name for our men. The church centers on the man. If he is strong enough to draw it and hold it together, we want him in. If he is not he has to slide. I know this is a sad state of affairs but it is just so .... Hence if a man is full of a pure natural power, he can take any position in the church that may be open to him."[1]

Robert Collyer's letters kept Jasper going. Just when he felt there was no use a new letter would appear in the mail bring fresh inspiration.

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[1] Ibid, p.12

"Do not get disheartened. The right time is sure to come. You cannot hasten Providence. A Quaker friend of mine says that fortune always works her wheel best when we keep off the crank. ---- Your present work, farm week-days, pulpit Sundays, is to you what my anvil and pulpit were for seven to ten years ( I was three years uneasy as you are) . I do not in the least regret my bondage. It was a grand inner growth. I hope your health will hold good, that is all I care for." [1]

Collyer did not stop at sending advice; he sent more books and money that was sorely needed.

Jasper, never physically strong, began to grow weak under the terrific demands on his strength. Night after night he tossed about planning new methods to educate his people, day after day he sweated in the fields to earn bread, time after time he preached in widely separated places. He felt deeply his own lack of education and believed that he was the blind trying to lead the blind. Collyer told him to keep on he was doing more than he realized for the people, but Jasper was still young enough to be impatient and sick enough to need a rest. He asked Collyer about Meadville Theological School and Robert Collyer stuck his tongue in his cheek and wrote back:

"About Meadville, I cannot advise you. I was never inside college walls until I went to preach a commencement sermon at Meadville last summer ..... You are doing well - I would to God you had more sympathy. Browning has a line in one of his poems which I think touches you nearer I hope than you will ever suspect ....'When I saw his soul - Jasper first, I said.' Do not

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[1] Ibid, p.9

suppose the little mite I enclose is all my doing. I am never without secret service money....." [1]

Douthit plugged along for two more years after this letter and then went to see his friend about going to Meadville. Collyer looked at this man who had grown so thin and was so discouraged and sick at heart yet still wanted to improve himself as a minister. No quitting. Jasper wanted a better way to lead those miserable people of his. Collyer said, "My dear fellow, you are so thin I doubt if you can stand it to go through Meadville, and " , he added with the fears of a self-educated man, " I am afraid it will be a wet blanket to your enthusiasm, but you shall have a chance."

J.G.Forman was the minister at the Unitarian church in Alton and had served on the Western Sanitary Commission with Collyer and knew Douthit well enough to join heartily with Collyer in recommending him to Meadville.

In the fall of 1864 Jasper, with his wife and two children, started out for the Meadville Theological School.

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[1] Ibid, p.10 , December 15,1862

## CHAPTER VIII

## JASPER LEARNS MORE ABOUT LIBERALISM

The three years Jasper and Emily spent at Meadville were the happiest of their lives. Their two oldest children, Helen and George, were made the pets of the School. The Shippens and the Huidekopers were their patrons as they were patrons to the School. Miss Elizabeth Huidekoper, whose generosity and kindly personality had been the life blood of many a young minister, was to them a personal friend and helper.

The school on the hill grew into their lives and gave them both a new strength for the tasks that lay ahead. Jasper always spoke of it as "that school on God's hill" . It was not so much text books and formal classes that benefitted this young man from the frontier as did the spirit and life that resided in its personalities. In later years he remembered his personal meetings with the President, A.A.Livermore and Dr.George W.Hosmer and those two distinguished professors and real scholars and men, George L.Cary and Frederick Huidekoper. His fellow students he lists as Jenkin Lloyd Jones, Edward A.Horton, George H.Young, Isaac Porter, David Cronyn, and Charles Wendte.

To be with such men and blend his life with theirs was a deep inspiration. They were not so much students of religion as religious students.

The minister of the Meadville Church was then Richard Metcalf who preached to the students on Sundays and befriended them always. Jasper cherished one sermon of Metcalf's all his days. It's text is lost, but its title was " The Abiding Memory".

While Jasper was a student at Meadville he was honored

singularly from a most unexpected source. The United Brethren College at Westfield, Illinois, offered him its Presidency.

During the war Jasper and the United Brethren had been allies in a battle against slavery and intemperance. Both had agreed that a united front for morality was better than stressing theological differences and they considered themselves to be one in spirit and purpose.

Jasper was the first to recognize that he was not worthy of the honor because he lacked so much in scholarship. When he told President Livermore of the offer, the President smiled with paternal pride at his twenty-seven year old student, but wisely counseled him to first finish his course at the School.

Soon after Jasper graduated from Meadville in 1867 he was called to the Unitarian Church in Princeton,Illinois. This church was a part of the congregation of the Rev.Owen Lovejoy, a brother of Elijah P.Lovejoy, the man who had been mobbed at Alton and killed because of his abolitionist press and outspokenness for the cause of freedom.

This pastorate at Princeton was the completion of the basis Jasper had been laying for true liberalism. Lincoln had started him on the way, experience had taught him much, Collyer and Meadville Theological School had helped greatly and now he met in his congregation William Cullen Bryant.

Mrs. Douthit, it will be remembered, had once contributed to his paper. It was a happy meeting.

Jasper writes, " Before this acquaintance with the author of Thanatopsis I had read and thought more of Thomas Carlyle than of Emerson; but Mr. Bryant called my attention to the fact that Emerson was always sunny, sweet and optimistic, whereas Carlyle

was often cynical and pessimistic. I needed that lesson then. In my first efforts to reform I was liable to fault finding, to emphasize the error more than the truth, and under strong excitement was disposed to ridicule and be sarcastic. My speech was too often in the spirit of Carlyle than of Emerson ... I went fishing for men in the way Mr. Beecher once said some ministers do. It was as if a fisherman with a good outfit, hook, line and bait, should go along the bank of the stream or pond and thrash the water with his rod, crying 'Bite or be damned'". [1]

Jasper realized his greatest fault and tried to correct it. He was not always successful in his purpose, but he tried. He remembered by rote these words of the charge that Charles G. Ames had delivered at his ordination: " Take heed to your spirit and temper, <u>that you speak the truth only in love</u>." [2]

Jasper was at Princeton but three months. It would perhaps have been better for him had he stayed longer, but he felt his people in Shelby needed him. The people of the Princeton church protested his resignation unanimously. Robert Collyer felt that he was making a mistake to leave. Most of his friends believed he was being very foolish to give up a good salary and pleasant associates to go to this backwash of the frontier and serve without salary and the expectation of only the most precarious of livings.

Jasper could not explain to even his closest friends why this call to go back came so strongly to him. It would have sounded too much like heroics. Only his wife knew and understood. She faced the prospects she knew so well by bitter experience with a

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[1] Jasper Douthit's Story, p.87

[2] Ibid, P.88

valiant spirit and encouraged her husband to do what his inner-most being urged.

These two religious pioneers returned to Shelby, built a one room shanty and lived in it two years while they were building a three room house. They moved into the little home and lived in that for six years. During this time they started farming for a living and together doing the work of leading an unwilling people toward that abundant life they had envisaged for them.

Jasper started his preaching at a "hard-shelled" Baptist meetinghouse. This sect of Baptists had gradually lost their prestige in the neighborhood and left this log church empty except for occasional attempts at revivals. In this same building Jasper's mother had attended church with him, then a little baby, on her lap and listened to the two hour sermons.

Jasper had heard that the old Hardshells were going to hold a meeting in this place and over he went to see what they had to say. There were two preachers and each one preached for an hour and a half denouncing Sunday-schools and wicked college preachers. When they finished their tirades Jasper arose and announced that he was a college preacher and next Sunday would hold a meeting to form a Sunday-school.

Mark Twain would have enjoyed the scene and the sensation it caused. Perhaps he would have predicted accurately the result. The next Sunday there was a great crowd who had come out of curiosity to learn about Sunday-schools.

Most of the children were from the families of the day laborers working on the Big Four Railroad and they came in large numbers each Sunday to this new school. Mrs. Douthit started a subscription school and filled the one room home full of Irish

Catholic children. Jasper held meetings every night for several weeks and the old meeting house was jammed with people.

On Sundays some of the people who came to the Sunday-school meetings had motives other than religious ones. Some came to a center of people out of curiosity, some were lovers coming to a trysting place, some came to settle quarrels, and duels with bowie knives or pistols often took place in the yard.

Jasper preached his message of a higher morality and pleaded for temperance (which to him was total abstinence from liquor). He did not confine his work to preaching, but visited saloons and told the saloon keepers they must not sell to men whose families had seen him as a pastor and asked that they should be made to stop.

Before long he was as unpopular with saloon keepers as he had been once with southern sympathizers during the war.

Meanwhile the Douthits were forced to live on what they could raise on their little plot of ground, because the people believed it to be wrong to give the preacher anything.

The hardshelled Baptist preachers had preached that the minister should have his hospitality for himself and his horse as any other traveller and that was all. Now a settled minister under new conditions found this old idea lagging behind and keeping him from spending more time at his real work. Many prosperous farmers boasted that they had never given a dollar to a church during their entire lives and never intended to break their excellent record. These same farmers believed that it was well to have the Rev.Jasper Douthit visit them on their death bed and preach the funeral service after they were gone.

Jasper often hired a horse to ride out to these funerals

and after the services he was sometimes given a mere "thank ye" and more often expected to have been honored enough because he had been invited to officiate. Jasper never felt as badly about it as one might expect the father of a poverty-stricken family might, for he had a chance to meet and preach his Unitarian liberalism to a wider circle of people.

Nevertheless, it was a hard road without any support. The Roman Catholics were the only people who had been trained to support a religious institution with funds and it was from one of their number that Jasper received his first pay. This good Catholic had listened to Jasper's moral teachings with approval and one day spoke to Jasper about his sorry financial condition.

"I don't see how you live without pay," he said. "Come down to my house and I'll give you some 'sweetening' to help you along."

He gave Jasper a big jug of sorghum molasses and that was the full extent of his first year's salary.

The next year this same man gave him five dollars, the first money he ever received as a Shelby County minister.

This second year an old Nova Scotian who was an agnostic and had scoffed at churches all his life became impressed with the practical results of religion.

"Since these preaching services have begun, Douthit, my chickens have not been stolen so often and life and limb are safer. I for one am willing to chip in and help keep the thing going."

So it was than an agnostic headed the first subscription and raised fifty dollars for the second year.

A Roman Catholic and an agnostic were his first supporters and these two classifications of the brethren he loved continued

to support him as long as he lived.

Collyer was still his good counselor and friend. He was worried about his think hard working spiritual son, but never lost faith in him. He suggested that Douthit establish at least three preaching stations within a circle of a dozen miles and in this fashion spread his story and eke out a living with their greater support.

Jasper decided to follow his friend's advice. Mattoon was the nearest large settlement about twenty miles away and Jasper chose this as a preaching station. There both the Methodist and Presbyterian churches were at first opened to him and later the public halls. The work progressed rapidly here and a strong and large group of people expressed a desire to form a liberal church.

On December 15,1868 Jasper secured Ralph Waldo Emerson as a preacher. Emerson had never seen this section of his country before and, great lover of nature that he was, he was profoundly shocked to see the forest rapidly being mowed by the woodsmen's axe. About him everywhere were fields of stumps. The building of artificial prairie land in Illinois had begun.

Emerson said, "Douthit, this is sheer vandalism, vandalism! "

In Union Hall in Mattoon Emerson spoke on "Immortality". No one understood what his great discourse meant, but everyone joined in hearty praise of it, not daring to admit their woeful ignorance. One six-year-old girl raised her voice in the chorus of praise. This was too much for her older sister.

"Why, child, what do you know about that sermon? You couldn't understand a word of it."

The little girl was not to be mislead as a sermon critic. She answered, "Suppose I didn't understand the words, I knew the sermon was good; for I could see it in his face."

Just seven days after Emerson's beaming visit, December 22,1868, the Unity Church of Liberal Christians was organized in Mattoon and Jasper had a new preaching station.

## CHAPTER IX

## WORKING IN "EGYPT"

The Meadville Theological School had given Jasper the intellectual and spiritual assurance that he had lacked in his first try at bringing religion to his backward community. There were no more letters of despair to Robert Collyer; Jasper knew he was going in the right direction and it was a matter of long, long looks ahead and hard work.

With a church at Mattoon, twenty acres of land to cultivate, and preaching in the schoolhouses round about he was busy enough, but he was not satisfied with his accomplishment. Soon after Emerson's visit he made arrangements with the Shelbyville Union to edit a column called " The Preaching Corner ". This required two days of each week for writing, reading proof and walking to and from Shelbyville.

Jasper had never been physically strong and this high pressure work often put him in bed. Sometimes his wife would write his next sermon for him. Jasper did not merely admit this aid from his wife, but was joyful in his declaration of it. This would seem unusual only to an unmarried man, or one unhappily married. Jasper and his wife had a common task; they were one person.

Quite innocently Mrs. Douthit had once almost ruined their joint career. She danced one of the square dances at a harvest celebration! The neighbors looked at this as the most immoral of exhibitions, and for a minister's wife unforgiveable. But they did forgive her when they knew her charm and sincerity.

In 1868 Jasper started to build a new chapel within two

miles of his home in the country. The site of this chapel was an oak grove where the old log school house had stood when Jasper was a boy. There Jasper had played hopscotch in his coarse, home-spun tow shirt, a single garment that hung below the knees. Within a mile of the spot he had taught his first subscription school at eighteen years of age.

It was a slow job to build this chapel with meagre funds and do most of the actual building with his own hands. The project dragged through two summers and Jasper had spent so much time at his several tasks that it looked as though it would have to be postponed another summer before it could be opened.

On the morning of April 17,1870 Jasper awoke at two o'clock in the morning, and thinking of his tasks could not go back to sleep. In the wee hours he resolved to drop everything and concentrate on finishing this chapel. At daybreak he was up and in search of a plasterer. He mixed the mortar himself and sold enough personal belongings to pay the necessary bills. All summer he labored and by September the job was finished. He had built a chapel, but had no people to enter it or pay for its erection.[1]

Jasper invited Robert Collyer to come down and preach the dedication service. It was also Collyer's task to raise enough money at this first meeting to pay the debt on the church.

Collyer rode through the long lane of oaks up to this little chapel and in the quiet of the spot decided that he needed no inspiration other than that of the moment and, leaving his manuscript in the saddle bags, he went into the church. The seats and pulpit were of rough hewn black walnut. The whole interior

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[1] From a letter to George Douthit, his brother.

was home made. It was a warm comforting interior. [1]

There had been some disputing about the day Collyer should open the church. Douthit, out of consideration to his active minister friend, had insisted on a week day and the neighbors had held out for Sunday. Collyer preached his dedication on Thursday, September 29,1870. The neighbors were there to vent their spleen.

As soon as Collyer started to preach, the congregation began to grumble and walk out. Collyer remarked that babies had never been frightened by his voice and he was surprised to see grown men running away in fear. The congregation laughed. He told stories that were uproariously funny, yet made their point. Those who had gone out came in to see what was happening.

Jasper was afraid that the debt would not be taken care of at this meeting and his piercing eyes searched the coatless men on one side of the house and the sunbonneted women on the other with a great deal of apprehension.

Collyer told this rustic congregation what a church stood for and that Douthit had not built this one for himself to use as a preaching room, but he had built it for them. He told them they should help pay for it and he was going to ask their minister to go among them with a hat.

Jasper snatched up his big broad brimmed felt hat and stepped among his people. Collyer went on talking and the men grinned broadly and thrust down into their pockets for all the change they had. One old woman who had never in her life given a cent to a church looked glum when Collyer began his plea, but

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[1] From R.Collyer's account in The Liberal Christian .

as he went on she smiled and taking a small bag of silver out of her purse threw it in with the rest of the collection.

Jasper received half as much again as he needed, but the minister was no happier than his new congregation. They lingered to meet Collyer and shake hands with Douthit.

A poverty stricken, crazy old man who had recently escaped from the county poor house, sat throughout the meeting with his rags bundled about him and a big crooked stick in his hand. After the service he said, "It was grand! It was grand! "

"What was grand?" asked one of the neighbors who had come to jeer and ended by emptying his pockets.

"The meeting and the giving of so much money!" [1]

This part of the country in which Jasper preached and labored was called "Egypt" . Shelbyville is on the southern tip of the black earth belt that runs through Illinois and produces the states wealth in corn. From here south the land grows sandy and thin. Farms are poor and, in those days, people backward to the extreme.

Jasper decided to penetrate further into "Egypt" and chose the little village of Mode about twelve miles from Shelbyville in a remote part of the county. He found a school house near one of the oldest graveyards in the state and in this spot started preaching his new ethics to an unsympathetic congregation. Once a month Jasper horse was tied outside the schoolhouse and he was inside exhorting the meagre group to righteousness.

Gradually the people gave in to his persistence and

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1 This whole account is a composite of reports of an eye witness, Jasper's diary and Robert Collyer's report in the Liberal Christian, October, 1870.

began to come in larger numbers. Before long the schoolhouse was filled and within two years the house was too small to hold the people.

The farmers decided to build a larger church as a community project, call it Union Church, and make it open to all denominations, when the Unitarians were not using it. They built the house big enough to seat three hundred people and asked to have Robert Collyer come down from Chicago to dedicate it as he had the Oak Grove Chapel.

Collyer thought he had seen "Egypt" on his last visit, but this was a real wilderness filled with semi-civilized men. Nevertheless, he preached his best sermon and the church was dedicated debt free.

One old man known as "Uncle" Jake Eliot had given the land, the lumber, and much money. At the dedication services he announced that his corn crib was open to the horses and that everyone must come to his two room log house for lunch. [1]

During this time Jasper had been preaching the need of better education for the young people. It was the only way that he could see real advancement could be made. His method had worked well enough so that in five years its effects were discernible.

George W.Hosmer, President of Antioch College, visited Douthit and sent in an account of this visit to the Liberal Christian dated February 10,1873 in part it was as follows: "Southern Illinois, you know, was Egypt because so dark with

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1 The account of the church at Mode comes from the Shelbyville Union, July 14,1873, and the diary of Jasper Douthit for that year.

ignorance, intemperance and the love of slavery. Jasper, .... in his early youth rose up in protest against the life around him, he was for anti-slavery, for temperance, for education and for free liberal Christianity. The Community was incensed against him, violence was threatened; but he stood calm and determined. Pressed by such difficulties and even dangers, he heard there was to be a Conference of Liberal Christians at Detroit. I remember him as he appeared there, looking as Lincoln would have looked at his age. He touched our hearts, he convinced our reason, and we gave him the right hand of fellowship.....[1] I think we have no such Christian ministry as his."

June 7,1873, Hosmer wrote of Douthit in that number of the Liberal Christian: "He has four principal preaching stations; and by his large Catholic spirit and fine, sharp thought, he is winning hearers and fellow workers, and a great enlightenment already appears. People are collected for worship; schools are better managed and more cared for."

About this time Elder John Ellis an evangelist of the Christian church came to the county. Ellis was one of the early trustees of Antioch College and became acquainted with Douthit through President Hosmer. Until 1876 he was Jasper's constant helper and his name appears frequently in Douthit's diaries.

Ellis encouraged Jasper to try to start a church in the town of Shelbyville. Accordingly Jasper gave ample notice through the "Preaching Corner" of his intentions to hold a church service in the courthouse. The first Sunday the only man who came was one who had been so drunk the night before he was not

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[1] Hosmer took part in the Ordination.

able to get home. Jasper tried again the next Sunday without success. He made periodic attempts to secure a church there for six years and little was accomplished.

By 1874 Jasper was disheartened by the loss of his mother and his younger brother of the Knights of the Golden Circle affair, who had later gone to Antioch College. He had four children now and the load of poverty was more intense than it had been before.

John Ellis told him time and time again that he was wasting his strength preaching Unitarianism that was meant only for the cultured and educated minds. Ellis hinted that the Christian church would be ready to back him financially.[1] Douthit was in a quandary. The work had worn him out physically. He had been preaching four times a week and visiting the sick on foot over trails of frozen swamp and a hot summer prairie. His "Preaching Corner" had been a free contribution to the Union and the publisher had never offered him a cent. What should he do?

He wrote to Collyer, and Collyer immediately responded that he should come to the National Unitarian Conference at Saratoga, New York and speak.

Jasper and his wife decided to go, and on September 17, 1874 Jasper arose in that assembly and spoke.[1]

John D.Long, ex-Governor of Massachusetts, reported the event in the following way:[2]

"At the recent National Conference at Saratoga, where,

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1 Speech reported in the Christian Register, September 26,1874

2 Christian Register, March 13,1875

with the few usual exceptions which prove the rule, everyone was brilliant, fervid and kindling; where some denominational questions were argued with rare eloquence; where orators spoke, unsurpassed in graceful persuasiveness or magnificent declamation; where elaborate thinkers searched the obscurest enigmas of theology and science, the audience groping to follow, - you who were there remember that one evening, at a sort of mission meeting, there came forward a young man slender and tall, and as lank as Abraham Lincoln. His straight hair ran down behind his ears to the collar of his coat. He rambled in his speech, as if he were timid before that cultivated assembly, and stumbled over the minutes which he had first held in his hand. But his voice was of that sympathetic, human sort that you could not help listening to; his eyes were so honest and soulful and saintly you could not look away from them, and as he narrated in a homely way his labors among obscure men in obscure places, his preaching in barns, taverns, courthouses and schoolrooms, in that Egypt which is the Nazareth of his state, going about doing good, literally following in the steps of the Saviour, with scarce other compensation than his own sense of doing the Master's work, - so worn with his labors that he was almost too ill to be at Saratoga, - the heart of every man and woman in that audience went out to him and loved him; more than one cheek was wet with tears.

"Human nature which loves warm existences and generous deeds, and wearies of philosophy and talk, seemed to assert itself with a glad sense of relief, and this Christian warrior and holy pilgrim was from that hour the very hero of that great Conference.

" ---When he threw his notes aside and uttered his soul

in the freedom of his own quaint, natural exhortatory style...., I thought of the Jim Bludsos, the rough natures, the hungry souls, whom no white choker or clerical pendant could have touched, but to whom he had brought a gleam of the higher life, and in whom he had planted the springing seeds of Christian charity and culture; of the homes he had blessed and the hearts he had lightened, then and there it was that, walking on the plains of Judea, healing the sick, blessing little children, feeding the poor, and comforting the sinning and the sorrowing, I saw, with my own eyes, once more upon the earth, a living disciple of the blessed Jesus of Nazareth...."

Dr.Edward E.Hale wrote to Mrs. Douthis congratulating her on her husband's great speech. This is her reply:

"My dear Dr.Hale,

Thank you for your letter, speaking in such high terms of my husband's speech. You addressed your letter to Shelbyville, but I was under the same roof with you. I went with Mr. Douthit to that Saratoga Conference, expecting to sit in a corner and see the great assembly without being seen, and listen to the wise words of those who were to address the meetings, but after my husband's little speech the people noticed us so much that I was frightened. I could not understand it, because I knew that I had heard my husband speak very much better, a great many times, when nobody applauded him." [1]

When Douthit had finished his speech, the hour was late, but Rush R.Shippen, secretary of the Conference, presented two resolutions that were unanimously carried. These resolutions

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[1] Copy of this letter in Author's possession.

promised financial aid to the mission field.

The promise was about all Jasper ever received, nevertheless, he had been made happy by the approval of that great meeting. With his hand still thrilling to handshakes he went back to "Egypt" to work on gloriously.

## CHAPTER X

## A REFORMER IN SHELBYVILLE

Jasper came home to work on gloriously, but he realized little of the glory; for him he was doing a necessary work and that was all he knew or cared.

Ellis was still with him and sincerely rejoiced in the news that the Unitarians had decided to help the cause. He was not a sectarian opportunist and his heart was in the work. He again suggested that Jasper try for a church in Shelbyville, and more optimistic than he had been for years, Jasper plunged into this task.

It was 1874 when Jasper decided that he would keep up his Shelbyville work for one year even if he had to pay all expenses, act as janitor and preach to but a handful of people. Every Sunday after preaching at Oak Grove, he walked five miles to Shelbyville and preached. At the first meeting there were about twenty people and as they continued the numbers gradually increased.

Here is a typical fortnight of his activities as recorded in his diary of this year.

Jan.14 : Helped put the tombstone in base in morning. Cleaned out church in P.M. Preached at night to about 40. 7 degrees above zero - Text Eph.5:14.

Jan.15: Very cold. Read in forenoon. Afternoon went to Aunt Nancy's and preached in Log Church to 40.

Jan.16 : Rested in forenoon and studied. Preached under a great cloud(?) at Log Church to about two dozen.

Jan.17 : Preached at Log Church on "Victory" to about sixty. M. Petersen joined church.

Jan.18 : Preached at Oak Grove to about seventy five in A.M. Emma Davis joined. $101.50 pledged for this year.(1874)

Jan.19 : Went to town - opened with prayer, preached on "Temperance" . Came home late.

Feb. 3 : E. and I went to town and stayed at night with Fear's - tried to make arrangements to preach in Shelbyville. Down in spirit!

Feb. 4 : Continued effort for place to preach till noon. Came home - nearly sick - feel bad.

Feb. 5 : Studied in A.M. To town afternoon. Engaged courthouse to preach in. Sick and almost ready to give up.

Feb. 6 : Studied in A.M. Went to debate in log church in evening.

Feb. 7 : Sick in bed A.M. Went to Mode and preached to forty in evening. Feeling badly, had to stay all night with Uncle Jake.

Feb. 8 : Preached at Mode to about fifty at 11. A.M. and again at 3.30 P.M. to about twenty-four. Two joined church.

Jasper usually had funerals and drunken husbands to straighten out and there was little time for his farm. Robert Collyer remarked that Jasper was as poor a farmer as he was a good minister.[1]

May 13,1875 thirteen members united with the Shelbyville church organization that was now meeting regularly in the court-house. Ellis helped with the services by furnishing music and leading the singing, a gift that Jasper did not possess. The venture dragged discouragingly through that summer and fall and then Jasper had one of those spurts of concentration that had built the Oak Grove Chapel.

He insisted that his country congregations come in to help him. Ellis was driven to greater activities and Jenkin Lloyd Jones was invited to open the new effort which Jasper had called after Theodore Parker's famous sermon " A True Revival in

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[1] From one of the letters.

Religion" . Jones preached one of his practical and enthusiastic sermons and the revival was under way. There was a nucleus of twenty-one members and during the eight weeks of intensive work that followed the opening of the meetings in February,1876 the total jumped to seventy-five of the unchurched poor people, many of whom were drunkards.

One of the converts was a saloon keeper and a few years before he had threatened to smash a whiskey bottle on Jasper's head for his temperance preaching and interference with his business. Now he consulted his new minister about disposing of his business and was the rest of his life a regular church attendant.

Douthit had been worrying about a William A.Cochran who was one of the local politicians and a heavy drinker. The diaries reveal many visits and many prayers that Jasper said with him. The man was a natural leader and a natural drinker. The combined qualities were disastrous. During these meetings Cochran signed the church covenant and sought out the minister for another talk.

"Douthit, I am in a worse way than most people think; you don't know it all. You don't know how hard it is for me to resist when old friends ask me to drink. I'm going to have a desperate struggle and I will need all the help I can get. But I've enlisted for the war and I'm determined to stick it out if you'll stick by me." [1]

Jasper gave him his hand and together they fought it through to a victory. There was never a more loyal church member.

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[1] Jasper Douthit's Story, p.143

To the last he swung his abilities as a leader to keep his church strong and helpful.

It was a "true revival" for every new member lived to be an old and loyal one.

The new and extremely poor company of men and women who had united under Jasper's leadership decided to build a church building. They bought some land two blocks from the courthouse and by mortgage raised enough money to build a brick church of real charm. On November 2,1875 the Presbyterian minister, Benjamin Mills, the Christian minister, Theodore Brooks, the faithful Elder John Ellis, and Jasper laid the corner stone and May 8,1876 it was dedicated.

In the morning James Freeman Clarke, of Church of the Disciples, Boston, preached the dedication sermon; that night William J.Elliot, minister of the Church of the Messiah in St. Louis and Chancellor of Washington University, preached the sermon, assisted in the services by two other Unitarian ministers, John H.Heywood and F.L.Hosmer, and Rabbi Sonnenchein of St. Louis and Elder John Ellis.

The inclusion of a liberal Rabbi in the services is significant and typical of Unitarianism.

Jasper felt that he was now committed to a Shelbyville ministry, and in the spring of 1875 he had quitted the little house in the country and moved to the town. In 1877 George Partridge of St.Louis and Jasper's friends in Shelbyville helped buy the parsonage near by the church. A debt of twelve hundred dollars secured by mortgage was left on Jasper's hands.

He had realized that it was a serious financial venture

to leave his little self-supporting farm for the town, but encouraged by promises from his church and the sudden success of the enterprise in Shelbyville he had moved. The good intentions of his friends in giving him a new house and a debt larger than he had ever had before in his life were of doubtful advantage.

Up to this time he had not been in close association with any of his orthodox ministerial brethren. Now they were near at hand. He had been dealing with farmers, now tradesmen were about him. What would happen?

Jasper's trail had crossed that of the saloon owners more than once with disastrous effects, but now with them within sight every day he flared up in indignation. Shooting on the street by drunken men was a common occurence. Every one in the town was poverty stricken except the liquor sellers. Robberies and rapes were common. Children could not go to school in the winter because their fathers had used for drink the money intended for their shoes.

Jasper had posters printed showing the financial and moral waste in significant ways and openly told the saloons there was not room enough for them and his church in the same town.

Their reply was to foreclose the mortgage on the parsonage. Within a short time the people of the church had quietly gone to work and paid the mortgage completely.

The liquor dealers united and boycotted his parishioners and his salary was cut to the bone.

The "Blue Ribbon Crusade" for temperance was sweeping over the country and Jasper joined forces with this movement. For forty-two nights in succession he held crowded meetings and at the end of the campaign almost everyone in Shelbyville was wearing

a blue ribbon as a symbol of their pledge not to drink.

At the conclusion of this long battle Jasper was sick in bed for six weeks.

After he was well enough to walk he found that his heart was weak and he could walk but twelve steps without resting. His diary shows that during the campaign he had been up and at work at one-thirty in the morning after a few hours sleep. He was utterly fatigued and Miss Elizabeth Huidekoper and her friends made it possible for him to take the only vacation he ever had in his life.

For all places for a man with a weak heart to go the mountains are supposed to be the worst. But Jasper went to the White Mountains of New Hampshire, climbed Mount Washington and never felt better in his life! He met Henry Ward Beecher, preached to the New Hampshire farmers on temperance, and returned to Shelbyville ready for a new spurt of activity.[1]

What ground the "Blue Ribbon Crusade" had gained was now lost. The work had to be done all over again. The other ministers of the town had refused to help him and one of them had cursed this Unitarian so roundly in the midst of his pastoral prayer that even his own congregation was shocked. Jasper had answered the fake statements of the orthodox brethren through the Union column and now found himself between a cross fire of the saloons and the bigoted Christian ministers.

He was not strong enough to keep up his circuit riding in the country and do a full job in Shelbyville, so he gave up the outside churches as preaching stations and started a post-

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[1] For a full account of this trip see Jasper Douthit's Story .

office mission. In 1880 Jasper bought a small printing press and published a parish newspaper Our Best Words . Its first subscriber was the local Catholic priest. The father was as much on the outside of the Christian ministerial group as was Jasper, and they had this and a mutual hatred of liquor as strong bases for friendship.

The Roman Catholic Church was almost across the street and both men and both churches became close friends. One day Jasper said to his friend, "Father, do you believe I'll go to hell when I die? "

The priest grinned broadly and replied, "I'll be more lenient with you than your Protestant friends and admit you have good chances of getting into heaven." [1]

Our Best Words soon became a monthly paper and Jasper's older son George helped with the printing and incidental labors connected with the young paper. It was immediately popular and the first issues were sold out completely. It reached a wide circulation and during its life actually won members for the Unitarian church in cities where the name had long been unknown. Jasper said of the paper:

I think it is not too much to say that without some such printed messenger this mission could not have had half the influence in making known our principles of freedom, fellowship and character in religion." [2]

Jasper had started upon an immediate campaign against

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[1] An incident remembered by Winnifred Douthit, Jasper's daughter.

[2] Jasper Douthit's Story, p.155. The underscoring is mine and the words were of importance in the light of the "Western Controversy"

against the saloons upon his return from the eastern trip and swung his new weapon, the paper, into line.

The drinking incidental to political campaigning had gone on unabated from the days of the still-house and drunken poll attendants of Jasper's boyhood. The custom of treating drinks at election time was so firmly rooted that the rooters in all parties believed it to be necessary for success. It was impossible to have a fair election under these conditions.

Jasper pleaded with the candidates and since he made no progress with them, started out to battle single handed. He says of the tactics he used:

"I saw no more effective method of working than to publicly expose through Our Best Words every clearly known case of a candidate setting up drinks while electioneering for office. I gave public warning that I would publish the names of any and all candidates who treated voters to liquor. It was done, but it was a painful experience. The saloon was in politics, and I enlisted for a war to drive it out. Neither of the political parties would tackle the giant, nor whisper a word against it in their platforms or party organs ..... My printing press would have probably been burned but for the fact that it was in a third story where fire could not consume it without putting a whole block in ashes."

Our Best Words became a weekly and reached the largest circulation of any paper in the county. Jasper was becoming a power for the liquor traffickers to reckon with.

At the same time he was replying to his orthodox critics.

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[2] which we shall see something of in the next chapter.

Bishop Edwards of the United Brethren Church, the same sect that had once asked Jasper to be the president of one of their colleges, came to Shelbyville and pronounced the words that called God's doom upon the Unitarians. Jasper replied to Edwards' charges publicly and printed the sermon in his paper. Robert Collyer and his people at Unity Church had it published and circulated about the country. Jasper's old professor, Frederick Huidekoper, sent the works of Channing and other Unitarian writers to Jasper to give to the Bishop. The Bishop was overwhelmed.

A new and young Presbyterian minister announced that he could not have fellowship with this Unitarian preacher and Jasper, although he liked the young fellow, could not make him a friend. He would never attend a meeting at which Jasper presided until the Unitarian church arranged a temperance rally at which Governor John St.John of Kansas was the speaker. The young man was there. After the meeting he reached across the chairs, grasped Douthit's hand and said, "Brother Douthit, let's hold the next meeting in a larger church."

Soon after this the two men met at the post office, where Jasper received a black skull and cross bones and a threat of death unless he ceased his activities against the saloons. The young Presbyterian asked for the letter and the following Sunday read it from the pulpit and using it as a text lambasted the political system that stood for these tactics.

From this time on Jasper had a new ally.

James E.West, a Methodist minister, came to the town and was the first to suggest a pulpit exchange.

The Christian minister had steered clear of controversy from the first and now became most friendly.

A ministerial alliance to fight liquor was proposed and Jasper held out for a membership for his good friend the priest and he was admitted. Jasper received the surprise of his life when he, the Unitarian minister, was elected first president.

The battle with the saloons was now a short one and within a year they had left the city and Jasper's printing press had been moved into the corner office of the main street that had once been the home of the city's largest saloon.

Strangely enough, almost every one-time saloon keeper in Shelbyville insisted that Douthit officiate at his funeral, and they all learned to love this stubborn and yet friendly reformer.

## CHAPTER XI

## JASPER AND THE WESTERN ISSUE

In New York City in April, 1865 the first convention of Unitarian churches represented by the churches was held to make for a stronger organization of the churches around a definite goal. James Freeman Clarke pleaded eloquently for a broad spirit of unity and a preamble was adopted which claimed that the delegates were "disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ" .[1]

At the next conference at Syracuse, New York in 1866 the more liberal wing objected to the phrase just quoted and unsuccessfully tried to put through an amendment. While they claimed they wanted a broader fellowship, they narrowed their fellowship by forming the Free Religious Association in Boston in 1867 and many allowed the removal of their names from the official Unitarian Year Book. The officers of the Association, perhaps trying to prove they were "disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ", desired that William J.Potter, minister at New Bedford, who belonged to the new society, have his name omitted from the book.

Both sides were proving to be fine liberals!

The Western Conference at its meeting in 1875 joined in the protest over the dropping of Potter's name. In their resolutions they proved themselves unanimously opposed not to the word "Christian" , but to any attempt to define the word.

Meanwhile in the west Jenkin Lloyd Jones was making the attempt to centralize the Western Conference and in 1882 it was

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1 Quoted by R.W.F.Seebode in Jenkin Lloyd Jones, p.109 , from G.W.Cooke , Unitarianism in America, p.187 .

voted to incorporate; the committee on work presented a plan of incorporation. There was both a majority report and a minority report. Each report stated alike the purposes of business, but disagreed in the last phrase which had to do with religion. The majority report's last phrase was: " and the promotion of rational religion", and the minority report: "and the advancement of the cause of intelligence, freedom, reverence, fellowship, character and helpfulness in religion".

Jones, Gannett and Hosmer backed the wordy minority report, and Douthit, Sunderland, Eliot backed the majority report.

Finally the report was adopted without either phrase, and here were the seeds of a controversy that has been magnified by heated dispute and bias until sober historians have been led to believe it was the most important issue in Unitarianism.

J.T.Sunderland argued that the wordy definition, because of its words, was not broad enough. For his side he elaborated on why he felt left out by such a statement: "nor are freedom, fellowship and character plus worship, helpfulness and truth in religion all that Unitarianism stands for and means to some of us. Besides what is signified by all these words, it also stands to us for an important historic connection with a great past; in a word, it stands for nothing less than what is highest, sweetest and most vital in the great word, Christianity..... A majority of the brethren at Cleveland preferred not to define Unitarianism at all, leaving it to define itself in a general way by its historic record, and by the fresh utterances of its representative men; and at the same time leaving every person professing it, at liberty to define it for himself." [1]

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[1] Unity X#2, September 16, p.291

Sunderland's position would seem broad enough in so far as he did not want to define the Unitarian position, but wanted it to define itself by history and future work. Jenkin Lloyd Jones had made the wordy statement his pet and crying out that his view was the broader, rallied the radicals to his banner. In an attempt for everyone to become broader and more tolerant the west was split on the issue of what words were the most indicative of breadth.

Each camp spent the next eight years angrily drawing verbal circles which were claimed to include the other side, but to no avail. Each side had a large element of truth in its arguments, and each side had also a large element of bigotry.

One side claimed the other was "nothing but ethicists" and the other side insinuated that the others were "nothing but orthodox Christians" . Neither of these charges was true.

The so-called "ethicists" merely wanted to build a verbal statement that would include the liberal Christian as well as those who might not necessarily hold Christianity to be their religious beliefs - aworthy purpose. The so-called "orthodox Christians" were not at all orthodox and felt that the spirit of Jesus interpreted without dogma was a basis of fellowship wide enough to include even those who might not feel inclined to profess Christianity. They insisted that the word Christian be not interpreted in any creed and that it must always be left wide open for interpretation. They were conservative in the sense that they felt the name "Christian" should be used to indicate the matrix in which they had grown.

Neither side could understand the other and soon they were not trying to understand, but only to convince the other

side they were wrong.

Jenkin Lloyd Jones became the editor of Unity a magazine which bore as a motto the words of the minority report - Freedom, Fellowship and Character. To Jones this issue of words and his understanding of them became the most serious issue of his life. He vehemently propagandized his point of view and raised the ire of Jasper Douthit.

Jasper used Our Best Words to reply as vehemently as Jones had begun, and the battle was on.

Those who thought the word Christian hindered the free growth of Unitarianism became "Unity men" and those who believed Unitarianism could not grow without the word Christian joined with Jasper.

In Our Best Words (extra), of April 1884 Jasper published some letters he had written explaining why he felt the Christian basis of fellowship was greater than a non-Christian through a long and wordy three pages he made these three arguments.

1. That the non-Christian basis forced out as many people, if not more, than the Christian basis. [1]

2. That between the cultivated ethicists and only the average man who understands the words of Jesus and needs them there can be no doubt as to which the Unitarian is pledged. (to the average man) [2]

3. That Christianity is the historical background of Unitarianism and should be preserved as the channel of development. [3]

The article was one of friendly, yet firm conviction.

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[1] Our Best Words, Vol.V, No.5, p.4, 2nd col.

[2] Ibid., p.5, col.1 .

[3] Ibid., p.6 ff.

Jenkin Lloyd Jones through Unity made a reply that was personal and for the most part in very poor taste. He said:

"We respect too much the earnestness of our brother and have too high and admiration of his fervor to enter into a detailed discussion of this extra, which is replete with extravagant rhetoric, inaccuracies and reflections of one's own personality which makes the publication of "old letters" almost a matter of questionable taste.....

"In justice to the consecrated labor bestowed upon many a non-triumphant effort in the West we must also resent the old fling at "failures" which stare us in the face. It comes with ill grace from one who is the oldest Unitarian beneficiary in the West, who, after fifteen years in a prosperous Illinois town of average intelligence is still far from being self-supporting....." [1]

The letter was not written in the spirit of Unitarianism nor by the canons of argument. Jones had failed to be a gentleman.

Jasper replied to this letter and his reply was published in Unity . In part it was as follows:

".... I have no desire to indulge in offensive personalities. I have no fling to make at anyone for 'extravagant rhetoric' , 'questionable taste' etc. If I know it, I shall not follow the example of Unity when it replied to Dr.Patnam's candid address on 'Some aspects of Unitarianism in America' by calling him 'blue' and 'sick' ....." [2]

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[1] Unity XIII ., #6 , May 16,1884, pp.103-5

[2] This editorial to which Jasper refers may be found in Unity XI., #9, July 1,1883. It was written in a name-calling tabloid style rather than a traditional spirit of liberalism.

".... I cannot believe that you meant to convey the impression, which your language is likely to give those not familiar with this mission, that this is as favorable a locality as any in the West for establishing self-supporting Unitarian churches, because you have often told me that you considered it a most difficult field for such an enterprise; and furthermore, - but I forbear....

"This is largely a district for missionary work, as you very well know; and the minister stationed here preaches in the course of every year to thousands who will or can give little or nothing for the support of Unitarian preaching.....

"Most of those to whom I minister are poor, - too poor to subscribe for Unity or the Register even if those papers were suited to their wants. Very few of the members of these congregations ever heard Unitarian preaching before they heard me. Moreover there was a strong prejudice against Unitarians. Ministers of orthodox denominations would tell their people that Unitarians did not believe in Christ, and these ministers would often quote the flippant utterances of some Unitarian to prove their charge. I could counter these charges by quoting our standard authors and by appealing to the basis of the American Unitarian Association, the preamble of our National Conference and all other Conferences until the Western Conference declared its present non-Christian platform.....

"I have no inclination to dispute with you about the meaning of words which to you may be emptiness. I can only go on using words that to me and to those whom I feel most called to minister are fraught with deep meaning. I am willing with you to wait "the coming dictionary" , but I most solemnly protest

against the idea that a Unitarian Christian minister must be called 'narrow' and 'exclusive' merely because he declines to march under a banner on which is inscribed the name Unitarian, but from which the name Christ is rejected.

"Always rejoicing in your good works and abating no jot of good fellowship for you, and ever ready to cooperate with you and all of like mind and heart, in every way and means that I can see is for the advancement of the 'Kingdom of God' in the spirit of Christ, I beg you to believe me, Yours very heartily, Jasper Douthit." [1]

William G.Eliot, Chancellor of Washington University, wrote to Jasper saying, "Substantially I agree with you." [2]

Many men in the East including Henry W.Foote, minister of King's Chapel, and James Freeman Clarke, wrote their encouragement.

May 17-19,1884, the Western Unitarian Conference met with only about twenty-eight out of the ninety or more societies represented and tried to settle the controversy. William Channing Gannett offered a resolution which, while it claimed not to be a creed, was put forth as a statement of beliefs. There were ten affirmations and they were liberal enough for their day, but could never be unanimously accepted by Unitarians today in that they are too binding.[3]

Mr. Utter offered a substitute to Gannett's resolution

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[1] Unity, Vol.XIII, #8, June 16,1884.

[2] Our Best Words, June 1,1887.

[3] This resolution may be found in Unity, Vol.XIX, June 4 and 11,1885. p.200 ff.

that would make any doctrinal question ruled out of the conference in so far as doctrine rests with the individual. This was defeated.[1]

Mr. Thayer moved an amendment which would make these statements of belief to be understood as a mere belief of the majority and open to re-statement. This amendment was lost.[2] The resolution was adopted by a vote of 59 to 13.

Jasper lashed out at this high-handed carrying of the motion and its definite creedal content in his paper Our Best Words calling for the rallying of the forces for which he stood.[3]

Jasper's men and the Unity men by this time had lost their heads and were fighting for words that because of long championing had become dear. The middle ground occupied by such men as Utter and Thayer was that of true Liberals.

J.H.Allen, editor of the Unitarian Review appraised the controversy from far-away New England with great clearness and insight when he said the whole business was a "windy issue which will blow away without any damage to the Unitarian body."[4]

Both the Unity men and Our Best Words were horrified at such a statement about their pet issue, and said so.

Of all the sincere combatants William Channing Gannett was the only one who lived through the issue as a true liberal, and Jasper who was bitterly opposed to his ideas could write of

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[1] Unity, Vol.XIX, June 4 and 11, 1885

[2] Ibid .

[3] Our Best Words, June 1,1887 .

[4] Unitarian Review, Vol.XVII, February, 1887.

him: "How can we very well help smiling at so much self-complacent good nature." [1]

Richard W.F.Seebode in his dissertation for the degree of bachelor of Divinity writes of the conclusion of the "Issue in the West" as follows:

"The practical settlement of the issue came at the meeting of the Western Conference in 1892, though the final settlement was postponed for another two years when the National Conference revised its constitution and re-wrote the preamble....

"In 1892, Sunderland and a group of his friends came to the Western Conference meeting at All Soul's Church, Chicago, to propose a resolution looking toward the reunion of the Unitarian forces in the west. After a long discussion and several votes on amendments a resolution, acceptable to Sunderland, was adopted,stating:

'With a view to meeting the wishes of some of the Unitarian churches and workers of the West and to achieve greater union and harmony among all the churches of the Western Conference, we recommend to the Conference the passing of the following resolution:

Resolved, That to the statement of things most commonly believed among us, adopted by the Western Unitarian Conference in 1887, the following supplementary resolution be added, the same to be printed regularly with that statement.

The Western Unitarian Conference hereby declares it to be its aim and purpose to promulgate a religion in harmony with the foregoing preamble and statements." [2]

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[1] Our Best Words, April 1,1887.

[2] R.W.F.Seebode: Jenkin Lloyd Jones, p.14 ff.

Jones felt this resolution was illogical, but he, as well as the others, had had the issue grow somewhat stale and was ready for a rest from an affair that was too long drawn out.

September 26,1894 the whole issue ceased to be, in a fashion that at last pleased everyone. This date was that of the fifteenth session of the National Conference of Unitarian and other Christian Churches held in Saratoga,New York. How this came about is here told for the first time by one of those who had a great part in healing the wound, Jabez T.Sunderland.

"At the meeting of the National Conference a year before, a Committee had been appointed to draft a basis and report at the present meeting (1894) . Rev.M.J.Savage was chairman of that committee and to him was given the task of drafting the basis. At the beginning of the conference he came to me and said, "I want the basis to be exactly what you fought for in the west. I will come to your room in your hotel, and we will draft it there. [1]

"He came. We went over the whole matter together very carefully. He insisted that every word of the basis should be mine. And <u>it was</u>. I did not allow any mention of my name in connection with it, for fear that, if I did, some of the Western men might be prejudiced against the basis. Thus at last the long struggle ended most happily, by the whole Unitarian body placing itself upon the broad, simple, undogmatic religion of Jesus - 'love to God and love to man' - which Mr.Douthit, standing lovingly and earnestly by my side had fought for throughout the eight years from 1886 to 1894." [1]

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[1] From a letter written to the author, April 12,1935 .

This resolution of Sunderland's included the statement that this basis was not an authoritative test and the Unity men went their way rejoicing. Both Unity and Our Best Words praised the resolution and all were again fast friends.

The whole issue had wasted much valuable time for everyone and now that it was over the men went back to work with enthusiasm. Jasper had already started on a new venture near Shelbyville at Lithia Springs.

## CHAPTER XII

## LITHIA SPRINGS

When Jasper rode horseback or walked to his preaching stations he had usually tried to sing (singing was not one of his accomplishments) an old ballad of the itinerant Methodist preachers:

"No foot of the land do I possess,
Nor cottage in the wilderness - "

While he could still feel these words really applied to him, he was a happy man, and if those words could have been applicable all his life his way might have been easier. But about 1885 his father had died and the administrators of the estate set aside a small section of uncultivated hilly land for Jasper, and the song left Jasper's lips and soon was to leave his heart as a result of it.

The land was about two miles west of the Mattoon-Shelbyville road, five miles from Shelbyville. The last glacier had piled the earth into well moulded hills, unusual for this part of Illinois, and through the valley running between two ridges there was a flat bottomland carpeted with thick grass watered by never failing springs that contained minerals making them slightly bitter to taste. A grove of maple and hickory trees completed the attractive setting.

The people of Shelbyville soon discovered that it was an ideal picnic ground, and during the summer they drove out to enjoy a day away from all their troubles and in a happy natural spot. Very soon the ousted saloon keepers saw that the place had business possibilities and established saloons about this natural park and sold their wares.

Jasper's brother, George, reports in his diary what happened there during a Fourth of July celebration.

"In the afternoon went to Rolls to a picnic with Martin and Marion and was sorry enough for it too. Saw some fighting which was not pleasant. This is a day that ought to be spent in joy and festivity, but it surely ought not to be a day that has more wickedness than almost any other day in the year as it is now. It is really discouraging to go to a place like that picnic and see young women dancing with men that they almost have to hold up to keep from falling. It looks as though this neighborhood were entirely under the control of Satan. It is wholly given to the gratification of animal propensities. I look at its future as dark and ominous. There is little good to be expected from its present inhabitants unless there is a change."

Since Jasper now owned the land he felt that there could be that change. Basket lunches had long been a favorite pastime of the churches during the summer months, and Jasper a popular speaker at these inter-denominational picnics. Jasper invited the next gathering of the religious groups to be held at this property of his he had called with his fellow townsmen Lithia Springs.

August 31,1884 the basket lunch meeting at Lithia was the first religious meeting to be held on the grounds, and two thousand people were there. In the afternoon Jasper carried his temperance reform right into enemy country by holding a religious meeting denouncing the surrounding saloons. The great crowd sang and ended the meeting by filing by the several ministers in charge and clasping their hands in token of their desire to work together in building the kingdom of God.

The next year J.T.Sunderland, Secretary of the Western Conference, came down from Chicago and preached to the people sitting around him on rough logs and no other covering than the August sky. In the afternoon he held special services for the children and left the meeting as inspired as he had made them.

Jasper next invited the people of the county to come to a Fourth of July celebration. The papers reported ten thousand there. Instead of the things his brother had seen a few years before there was a gathering of families to hear a minister preach on the meaning of their country's birthday.

Jasper was so encouraged by these several responses that he decided to establish in this place a rallying ground for practical religion.

Jasper had never made enough salary to keep his family out of want. To undertake the work of clearing out underbrush, fence in the park, build suitable buildings and roads was more than his pocketbook could stand. No business man would back the venture and Jasper was compelled to try it alone.

He mortgaged the land and started his work, but was immediately stopped by a series of threatened law suits.

The only road to the springs ran diagonally across the section lines as it had from the days it had been an Indian trail. The town commissioners insisted that for the convenience of the public it must continue to run that way so as to include the springs, and that the owner had no right to fence off and control the springs. The saloon interests claimed that the land by reason of long use was public property and to allow a "temperance crank" to control it meant a serious infringement on "personal liberty" .

The county legislature appointed a committee of judges which assembled at Lithia and seated on logs heard the case. After heated argument and eloquent pleading it was decided that the road must be changed to the section line and the springs could be enclosed.

With the help of the neighbors Jasper erected a shed open on all sides to be used as an auditorium, fenced in the land to keep the cattle out, and cleaned and walled in the springs. He announced a ten day encampment meeting and about one hundred people came, pitched tents and stayed to hear local preachers speak on temperance and moral living.

The next year the ten day meeting brought three hundred enthusiastic campers and Jasper started to build roads. The spring water was analyzed at the University of Illinois and advertised as beneficial to the health. The second year was a great success and by the third year it was very well known locally and attended by eight hundred people and the time of encampment increased to fifteen days.

The business men who had refused to back the venture at first now sought to invest in it. They saw possibilities of building a fashionable hotel and by widely advertising the springs secure a patronage that would mean a profit for them. Jasper refused to run Lithia Springs on a profit-paying basis and insisted that the venture remain an inter-denominational meeting for educational purposes.

As the years went on the crowds increased to fifteen hundreds and the business men of Shelbyville believed that Jasper was making money hand over fist. As a matter of fact he had just mortgaged his house to secure more nationally known

figures than the usual run of neighborhood ministers and glee clubs. The amount of money required to run the business was a sum too great for Jasper to raise and he and his wife decided to ask the American Unitarian Association for aid.

November 10,1898 they sent a circular letter to the Unitarian friends of the mission offering to sell to the Association the entire estate at half its assessed value in order to have money to continue the venture. Edward Everett Hale made an appeal to accept the offer through an editorial in the Christian Register, but there was little notice taken of it.

In August, 1899 the Prohibitionist party offered to buy half the estate at the price, ten thousand dollars, Jasper had asked the Unitarian Association for the whole. George E.Adams, vice-President of the American Unitarian Association, was that day in camp and he asked them to refuse the Prohibitionist offer and wait until the National Conference of Unitarians which was to meet within two months at Washington,D.C.

At the Conference Edward Everett Hale moved to raise a fund for Lithia Springs and Mr. Adams seconded the motion. It was carried. Jasper immediately offered the whole property to the Association if they would raise eight thousand dollars - he had cut the price to make sure of it.

The motion and offer were referred to a committee and Jasper waited for two days for the report. The conference closed without further mention of the plan.

April,1900 the eight thousand dollars was paid and the deeds turned over to the Association.

Unfortunately three years had intervened between the offer and its final acceptance. Immediate aid had been the

crying need.

In the meantime C.C.McCabe had spoken at one of the meetings and suggested that the Springs become a Chautauqua. He promised help. Jasper realized that this would further their interests and not at all interfere with the Unitarian non-sectarian views and accepted.

Jasper invited the Roman Catholics to have a day for their program during the year and some of the people sulked in their tents. He invited Booker T.Washington to speak and the people shouted in frenzy against a black man at their meetings. But they learned to respect the Catholics and love Booker T. Washington. Washington came there at least once a year afterward.

The unfortunate part of the American Unitarian Association's delay was not, however, that the project had become a Chautauqua, but that those hungry capitalists had given up hope of ever securing the Springs for their own profit making purposes and had started a rival meeting within one half mile of Shelbyville backed by almost unlimited capital and calling it a "Chautauqua". This rival group were anxious to kill the Lithia Springs meeting as soon as possible and were backed by the saloons and a few bigoted religionists who hated Jasper's liberal views. They erected an auditorium costing eight thousand dollars, built an artificial pond on their grounds and hired the best speakers they could find in the country.

August 1901 Jasper's friends were happy to know the Unitarians were backing him and were there that day to dedicate the grounds, but Jasper was disconsolate over the rival camp. Henry H.Barber, professor at The Meadville Theological School,

was there that day and listened to Jasper's misgivings and doubts.

"Go on," said Barber, "I'll help you al l I can." He was as good as his word.

The International Chautauqua Alliance tried to stop the rival camp that was falsely using their name, but could do no more than advertise that it was not authentic and elect Jasper to the position of recording secretary as a means of defiance.

Jasper took heart and went on his way with a very limited capital and for a time did beat the rival "Chautauqua" . The people came from eight or ten of the surrounding states by rail-road and some fifty or a hundred miles by wagon. Jews and Gentiles, Catholics and Protestants of all sects, black people and white met here as friends to hear men and women of inter-national fame. Such men as Philip Snowden of England, Booker T.Washington, John Sobieski, a count of Poland and a hero of the American war between the states, several college presidents and many others who were then famous reform lecturers.

Early in the life of the Lithia Springs meetings Jasper became convinced that woman suffrage was a necessary goal and many programs were instigated that helped move this reform forward. He became interested in the labor movement and engaged speakers to present this radical doctrine. Soon he was in the midst of all sorts of social reform movements and doing his best to promote practical religion in all branches of human endeavor.

Nevertheless, it was a losing fight financially. The rival company took just enough away to keep the Lithia Springs Chautauqua with its head barely above water, and in the midst of the strain the doctors announced that Emily, Jasper's wife, had but a short time to live.

She had a tumor, or perhaps cancer, that the doctors had discovered five years earlier and in 1905 it had become serious. No one knew beside herself and Jasper that it was excruciatingly painful. She had gone about the grounds smiling and cheering everyone. Everyone called her "the little mother" . August first of that year, the day the assembly opened, she for the first time could not leave her bed.

Jasper had work to do, but was extremely worried about her. "How are you?" he asked anxiously. "I feel better" she said, "Go about your work and tell the new people to think the best things about each other and to try and make everyone happy."

Jasper felt cheered at her spirit and had barely left the cabin when he was suddenly called to hurry back, his wife wanted him. He turned and ran. It was too late, for she had died.

The shock was sudden and Jasper went mad with grief. He ran deep into the forest crying to God for mercy and finally his friends found him late at night and brought him back to the camp, a broken man.

He was seventy-one years old, and for forty-eight years this woman had been a part of him. Together they had battled the way of religion into a new country, together they had nursed sick babies to health, together they had gone to school and preached and lived their lives as one. He was to live twenty-two years after this, but as a man growing more and more into a shadow whose hands grasped for the fingers of a wife who was not there.

He immediately turned his Chautauqua over to a non-profit making corporation and within two years it had collapsed with a debt of twenty-five hundred dollars.

The rival company collapsed too, because people had at

last found the meaning of Jasper's life and were to be loyal to him for the remaining years.

But their loyalty meant nothing to him now. A few years earlier it would have saved him. Now he wanted his wife.

## CHAPTER XIII

## THE JOB

In one of Jasper's diaries of the last years appears this entry: "The one thing I have most dreaded is to grow old and useless. I dread to be left with nothing adequate to do, - to be cut off from my chosen work as though my life had gone out instead of growing into more and more usefulness. I do know that I should have my house in order and leave not hing undone to make a just and fitting close to my life work."

Old Jasper did not need to worry, for if his life had ended anywhere in its span, his house would have been in order and nothing left undone to make a just and fitting close.

He had never been a financial success and he never had a self-supporting church, but he had been a success as it is given to few men to be successful.

The district in which he had preached had been held by land speculators for years and Jasper had drawn into his fold tenant farmers and wage-workers who were ever on the move; free thinkers and agnostics not accustomed to church loyalty had accepted his way of life and joined the Unitarians. Jasper said of them with pride and affection, "No wealthy persons and none who have sought first for fashionable society and soft seats have identified themselves with my congregations." [1]

One of the townsmen said of Jasper's work: "If Jasper Douthit had just preached the gospel and not made such a crusade against liquor and other social evils, but instead had done more

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[1] From Jasper Douthit's Diary of 1911.

proselyting and persuaded people to join the Unitarian Church, he might have had a strong self-supporting congregation in Shelbyville. However, I'm inclined to believe the course he has pursued has done more good to everyone among all the churches and parties. His work has been leavening the whole community, killing religious bigotry and partisan prejudice, and has been most effective for moral reform." [1]

Jasper wrote that the first Easter service he had ever seen other than that of the Catholics was in a Unitarian church, the first Thanksgiving service was held by the Unitarians, the first flowers to be seen in church were seen in the Unitarian church and the first funeral was a Unitarian service. [2]

In the years when the mission began the school teachers were accustomed to go on drunken sprees on Saturday nights. Fox hunting, horse racing and gambling were the Sunday occupations of the people. Riots and street fighting were common occurrences and churches were often emptied by a practical-joking, drunken pistol-shooter.

These things had ceased to be because of Jasper. The churches held union services on Easter and Thanksgiving, and the Catholic priest and the Unitarian minister were there. Everywhere people were more liberal and enlightened. Drinking had reached the point of moderation.

Jasper had sewn good seeds and the whole community was reaping a good crop.

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[1] Jasper Douthit's Story, p.179

[2] MSS. of Jasper Douthit's Story, p.147 ; (not in published form.)

Jasper was not a mere reformer and prophet but a pastor. He had touched the souls of people with kindliness and affection. Any man was a better man for having known Jasper Douthit. At all hours of the day and night those who were in trouble sought him and found him ready. Young people loved him. He married more couples than any other minister in Shelbyville has done before or since. To the whole city he was a friend.

One night after the little meeting in Dole's Hall, Mattoon, in 1865, a young man approached the rostrum and asked to speak with the preacher. His name was Lyman Clark. He wanted to be a minister like Douthit. Jasper sent him to Meadville and for twenty-five years Lyman Clark served faithfully and well in the Unitarian ministry. His two sons went to Harvard and one of them, Albert W.Clark, became a Unitarian minister too.

When Jasper preached deep in "Egypt" he met a youngster, James Brown, who had been fired with a liberal religious zeal. Brooke Herford was at the ordination service of this young man. For twenty years James Brown preached in the country school-houses throughout the county and supported himself and his family by wagon making.

In that little church in Mode Jasper met a little bare-headed barefoot boy in homespun whose name was Napoleon Hoagland. Emily and Jasper educated him in their house, sent him to Meadville and finally into the Unitarian ministry.

Ada H.Kepley was ordained in the Unitarian church in Shelbyville and preached in Effingham.

Jasper had two sons, George and Robert Collyer. George he expected to be the famous one and Robert Collyer, who was always in some boyish mischief, the ne'er-do-well.

It was the other way. Robert Collyer Douthit went to the Meadville Theological School and became a distinguished Unitarian minister.

At seventy-six years of age Jasper was induced to write his auto-biography. It was a trying task for the old man. He wrote diligently and vividly, but his mind wandered back and forth from one decade to another. His wife had written the first part while she was alive and Jasper tried to finish it. In the late spring of 1909 it was finished and Jenkin Lloyd Jones wrote the introduction and said of him:

"Mr. Douthit was a 'home missionary', but he expounded a foreign gospel. 'About the last place on earth one would expect to find or try to plant a Unitarian church,' was the common remark of his friends. Unitarianism was never put to a severer test than when Jasper Douthit sought with it to ameliorate the severities and remove the illiteracy and iniquities of southern Illinois in the sixties and seventies. Channing's interpretation of the gospel in terms of gentleness and love, Theodore Parker's interpretation of Christianity in terms of justice and freedom to the slave, and Emerson's rendering of the Universe in terms of order, progress and peace were by Douthit set over against Calvinism in its most dogmatic form, the whisky jug with its fiery contents, and the shot gun with its maximum of civic potency and political prowess, and the sequel shows that these higher interpretations of religion were tried and not found wanting.....

"It is not going too far afield to discover some strains of the humanitarian faith preached by Jasper Douthit, represented by better fences, the more passable roads, the safer bridges, the flowers in the front years, the well dressed and well kept children

sitting in up-to-date schoolhouses and receiving efficient tuition from competent teachers in the countryside traversed by him for over forty-five years.....

"It is a story that it would be hard to parallel in modern life for its uniqueness, its historic value, its heroic persistency and its spiritual suggestiveness. It is the story of an Oberlin of southern Illinois, a rustic Channing of the prairies, a Theodore Parker of the log house, reared in a land of mud and malaria." [1]

Jenkin Lloyd Jones was not a biased critic. On his first visit to Shelbyville as Secretary of the Western Conference he had insisted that a boat was more necessary than a horse on the swampy roads, and in his report to the Association[2] he stated that the Unitarians had aimed an arrow at the State capital and it had glanced off and stuck in the mud down in "Egypt" .

In 1927 Jasper was full of years and loved by the community that he had weaned into culture. He was ninety years old. The townspeople held a birthday celebration in the high school auditorium and speeches from neighbors and ministers of all denominations bore testimony to the old man. Telegrams came from all over the world from famous men and women and from humble parishioners who had left the county but not his church.

Jasper sat through it all with tears streaming down his cheeks; he was thinking of his wife and he was thinking what might be accomplished with these friends of his if he were but a young man and able to start from here instead of in those days

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[1] Excerpts from Introduction to Story of Jasper Douthit.
[2] American Unitarian Association.

he had first preached in the log schoolhouses.

He was too feeble to preach now and every Sunday he sat in a rocking chair under the pulpit he had made, rocking forward to catch each word, huddling in his great shawl with the craving of the old for heat.

His mind began to wander and he stumbled about the streets, a tall gaunt figure with white hair streaming down to his shoulders. Little children no longer ran from him as they had in the days that he had taken the enrollment for his President. They watched him with awe. Sometimes his mind would focus and he would smile at these children and pat their heads. Some of those children, now grown to adulthood, speak of those moments as ones of benediction.

Jasper went stumbling down those last years in a glorious sunset of life. At ninety-three he could not leave the house, but each day he dressed and wrote in his diary his dreams about Emily and his hopes and fears about their church. All day he would sit in his rocking chair with a robe across his knees, his eyes clear, waiting for the moment he had long expected.

June 11,1927 the moment came. His daughter heard him say, "Yes, Emily" and then he fell. He had risen from his chair and the lap robe had caught his ankles as he tried to step forward. He was unconscious and soon died.

Before his death the Shelbyville Democrat had paid its tribute:

"Do the people of Shelbyville realize as they ought that there is a man who daily walks our streets who has a national reputation? This man is so unostentatious that we who meet him and greet him lose sight of the fact that he is one of the

nation's great men. Everyone loves him. I need not say that his name is Jasper Douthit." [1]

One of the orthodox ministers of Shelbyville had published an account of his life in the National Inquirer in which he said, "Jasper Douthit is a great man. He will be great to the hour of his death, and great in the years to come, for he has done great things." [2]

His friend Jabez T.Sunderland wrote an appreciation of Jasper's life in The Christian Register[3] and all peoples paid their tributes in glowing praise, but Jasper had built his life into a greater memorial than anyone could voice and the spirit of his life comes best from his own words.

"During the first few years of my charge in Shelbyville I tried to act as state missionary for Illinois. I kept up services in Shelby county preaching also in Jacksonville, Alton, Hillsboro, Pana, Decatur, Farina, Centralia, Effingham, Charleston, Urbana and Champaign. But I broke down at such work; there was not enough of me to go around. Henceforth I concentrated my efforts in Shelbyville and vicinity, using Our Best Words as an arm reaching out among acquaintances made over the state.

" In fact I felt a stronger call to preach to the people who would gather to hear me in the schoolhouses and out door meetings in the vicinity of my birthplace.....

" I was offered a lucrative position under Lincoln's administration and also under Grant's. [4] I have had chances to

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[1] Christian Register, August 25,1927, quoted on p.680

[2] Ibid [3] Ibid

[4] He was offered a position as governor of an Indian reservation under Grant.

make four times more the salary that I have ever received from the people to whom I have ministered . But I have no regrets on that score. I am happy in the faith that what some may call my losses in time and money have not been wasted, but planted to grow and bear fruit for my children's children and my neighbor's children why my body is dust.

"This Home Mission has been to me a high calling of God..... I have by invitation preached in larger cities of the nation; Chicago, Boston, Cleveland, Toledo, Columbus, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Detroit, Ann Arbor, Milwaukee, Jacksonville, St.Louis, Louisville, New Orleans and other cities, but I can truly say I have never anywhere or anytime felt more honored before God than in preaching to Irish Catholics and other neighbors at Log Church; and never have I felt so loud a call anywhere as at such places as the old whiskey-haunted courthouse of Shelbyville." [1]

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[1]This quotation is from the MSS. of Jasper Douthit's Story.

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX I

## EXTRACT FROM DIARY OF 1869

Monday:- I preached three times yesterday and am therefore very nervous and tired this morning: but I have a lecture to give next Wednesday and it is to be written. I must begin immediately.

Tuesday:-I was interrupted yesterday and did not get to write a sentence, and tried today in the forenoon with no better success.

Tuesday midnight. On rising from the dinner table today I went to the field and planted a few melons, some sweetcorn, and re-planted some sod-corn - meditating the while on my discourse for Wednesday evening. A few happy thoughts struck me, as is apt to be the case when engaged in pleasant outdoor exercise. I started to the house to place the thoughts on paper - found some nice strawberries on the way and picked a hatful to take to the house. Brother is breaking prairie here for our orchard. Wife insists that we go again and gather the rest of the strawberries before they are plowed under. Poverty and considerations of economy induce me to consent. Helen (five year old girl) cries to go also and we take her. When we have gathered the straw-berries and start for the house my brother asks me to help drive the oxen to lay off a new land - mind you I have a lecture on the brain, but my brother and I are partners and I know it would not do to refuse. The land is marked off and crooked enough too, and my mind is crookeder by this time; but confused as I am, I retire to our little bedroom. Just as the pencil is placed on the paper Bub (George, the baby) awakes and begins to cry. He is the baby. Good wife tries to pacify him, but without success. She takes him out of doors; he bawls right manfully

and seems to break forth afresh as I get ready to write a new sentence. Brother yells to the oxen savagely; sometimes from the tone of his voice I am ready to believe they have broken the plow; then again I think they are running away and are about to kill or cripple him; and yet again it seems that the whole team is breaking over the yard fence and rushing wildly into the house. However, it was only a momentary breeze that blew the noise toward me. I make an effort"to draw in the wanderings of my mind,", as the Methodist brethren say, and proceed with my lecture . Just as I get a slender hold on an idea someone comes thundering through the house with giant tread. Of course I must let loose my idea to see who it is. It is brother after a drink.

I make another effort but Helen chatters, Bub screams, brother scolds and my wife is busy getting supper.

Of course my idea is lost and my good temper also by this time; but I mustn't show impatience or ill temper. What shall I do? Try again. But the noise and confusion is unabated; shall I flee to the shady grove nearby? No, supper is ready and I ate a light dinner, so as to think more clearly, and I am hungry. I eat abstemiously, do the chores, light the candle and retire to the room to write amid the rattle of supper dishes and the fretting of the children. They cry to be undressed and put to bed. Helen and Bub are placed in the trundle bed beside me. Helen teases her mother to get up. Bub asks a hundred questions and makes known a hundred wants, not quite a hundred, perhaps, but enough to distract me.

All those fine thoughts I had in the morning are in a jumble, my brain feels dizzy and all the sweetness of spirit is gone. I apply Solomon's medicine to Bub, but he only whines the

more, while mother fusses with Helen in the next room.

Now that dear mother is even and quiet in temper and cannot realize why I should be so tormented, so she hums a tune and makes the dishes rattle as unconcerned as if there were no one to be annoyed. I forget myself, lose my temper and give vent to a harsh petty word which brings tears to more than one pair of eyes and now I write with remorseful feelings and a resolve to quit the ministry.

Wednesday:- The cloud is gone ....

## APPENDIX II

### THE PREACHING CORNER
### March 24,1870

Editorial on "Our Common Schools" by Jasper Douthit, in the March 24,1870 issue of the Preaching Corner.

'Washington in his Farewell address, urges as an object 'of primary importance, the establishing of institutions for the' general diffusion of knowledge.' At the close of the Revolutionary War the South Carolina patriot soldier, Francis Marion, declared it as his conviction that a public system of Free Schools, such as was then in operation in that part of the land where toryism had given the least comfort and aid to our armies, was the only sure preventive against 'national ingratitude, rebellion, slavery and wretchedness.' He further declared that popular ignorance with which the toryism of that day seemed to be inseparably connected, caused the war for independence to last several years longer and cost thousands of precious lives and several millions of dollars. And then, with prophetic insight, the brave patriot warned his countrymen of the sad results that would inevitably follow a continued neglect of the education of the masses. Hearken! 'Ambitious demagogues will arise,' said Marion, the people through ignorant love of change will follow them; vast armies will be formed, bloody battles fought, and finally the guilty survivors will have to bend their necks,etc.'

We read these words many long years ago, in the concluding chapters of Wanes' life of Marion, and do not recollect of seeing them on paper since. But we have seen them through tears and in bloody letters on the vivid panorama of civil war. Marion's

warnings were unheeded and his words have been literally fulfilled. Pardon us if we should regard him and those that speak like him as very prophets whose words his countrymen, the American people, may disregard at their peril.

The common school system of Illinois is her glory. However much our free schools may be despised by the few of our citizens who are yet seemingly unmindful of the cause of the unhappy fate of those States that for a series of years not only neglected but really hated free schools, yet these same institutions have proven to be a principal means of our salvation as a nation. They are now one of the bulwarks of our liberties. Through them the people are heeding the farewell words of the 'Father of his country' and the warnings of their national prophets like Marion, Jefferson, Madison, Adams and others. Through them the people of the greatest Republic on the globe are obeying that first mandate of Jehovah: 'Let there be light.' Then let our schools be free and their number be increased and their glory perpetuated.

Are our Schools Free?

According to the present plan of supplying text-books and the exorbitant prices charged for these books these schools are really free only in name. The schools are made free in order that all classes, poor as well as rich, may receive the benefits of instruction in the fundamental branches of knowledge. But the books cost more in a six months attendance at school than it would require, in many cases, to pay for the tuition of the pupil for the same time. How shall the pupils of the free schools of our state be supplied with text books at the least cost possible? This is the practical question that demands timely and wise

legislation. Under the present arrangement, there is no legalized uniformity of text books, and the kind of books to be used in the schools is left to the caprice and whims of the several school committees or teachers. The books may be frequently changed and parents compelled to buy new books for their children or keep them out of school. The present effort of our more than usually efficient County Superintendent to secure a uniformity of text books through Shelby County is commendable. However, this is not just what is needed on the whole. In the first place, it is almost impossible to secure this uniformity in every district in the county; so that families moving from one district to another are liable to have to purchase a new set of books every time they move; these unsettled people are likely to be the very ones that can least afford to buy new books. In the second place, if adopted by the whole County, the publishers of that particular series of books have all the trumps in their own hands and may, if they choose, monopolize the whole school book business for the county, charging their own price, and not even allowing our local booksellers commission enough to pay for retailing the books, while the publishers of school books make greater profits by a very large per cent than either publishers or retailers of miscellaneous books. The several publishing houses enter into a kind of league that their books shall not be sold for more nor less than a certain specified price at retail, and that through their regular agents these books may first be introduced into schools at half retail price. But they take care to place the retail price at such high figures that they can well afford to make the reduction. It is plain that when a private publishing house succeeds in introducing its series

of text books in a certain county or number of counties, it thereby has something equivalent to the exclusive right of sale in that district. It is a fact that private publishing houses are making thousands of dollars at the expense of the children who attend our public schools. Many parents who are indifferent as to whether their children attend school anyhow, will not send them, if compelled to buy books for them very often; and many others are really not able to buy books at the present high prices. It is a fact that many of the children of our county are this day deprived of the privileges of the schools supported by the people of the state, because said children are not supplied with the necessary text books; and we presume this is the case in other counties of the state. In view of all this, are our schools really free? Is there not a grave defect in our school system, which if not remedied may thwart the very purpose for which free schools are established? These text books sell for nearly double the actual cost. They are sold at a great profit to enrich private coffers. Why not have them published by the state, and the same series being adopted all over the state, so that the common school children may be supplied with text books, by paying the actual cost of printing and binding? Would this wrong any one, and might it not same many more poor children from ignorance and crime!"

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